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REFLECTIONS

ON

The late Lord BOLINGBROKE's Letters

ON THE

STUDY and USE of HISTORY;

Especially so far as they relate to

CHRISTIANITY,

AND THE

HOLY SCRIPTURES,

To which are added,

OBSERVATIONS on some Passages in those Letters concerning the CONSEQUENCES of the late REVOLUTION, and the State of Things under the PRESENT ESTABLISHMENT.

By JOHN LELAND, D. D.

Author of *An Answer to Dr. Tyndall's Christianity as Old as the Creation*;

The Divine Authority of the Old and New Testament asserted, &c. against the Moral Philosopher; and

Remarks on a late Pamphlet, intituled, Christianity not founded on Argument.

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T H E

P R E F A C E.

ALTHOUGH no man needs to make an apology for using his best endeavours in defence of our common Christianity, when it is openly attacked; yet as my engaging again in this cause, after having done it on some former occasions, might have an appearance of too much forwardness; it was with some reluctance that I was persuaded to undertake it. What had great weight with me was, the judgment and advice of a person of great worth*, of whose sincere friendship I have had many proofs, and whom I greatly honour for his truly Christian and

* The Rev. Dr. Thomas Wilson, Rector of Walbrook, and Prebendary of Westminster.

candid spirit, as well as his zeal for our holy religion. He urged, that it was highly proper to take notice of the contempt and abuse attempted to be thrown upon Christianity and the holy Scriptures, by a writer of so great name, and whose specious insinuations, and confident assertions, might probably make disadvantageous impressions upon minds too well prepared to receive them. And, as he had not then heard that any other had undertaken it, or intended to do so; he thought my drawing up remarks on these Letters, which had made so much noise, might be of some use. This determined me to attempt it; and how far what is now offered is fitted to answer the intention, must be submitted to the judgment of the public. I am sensible of the disadvantage one is under in appearing against a writer of so distinguished a character, as the late Lord Viscount *Bolingbroke*. His lordship's admirers will no doubt expect, that a proper decent respect should be paid to his great abilities and talents, as well as quality. This I readily acknowledge. But there is certainly a still greater regard due to the honour of Christianity, which he hath unworthily insulted; and to the interest of the present establishment, which he hath endeavoured to weaken and expose. However, it is hoped the reader will find, that care has

been

been taken not to transgress the rules of decency; or to push the charge against him farther than his own words give just ground for; and that angry and reproachful expressions have not been made use of, even where there seemed to be a sufficient provocation given.

It might have been expected, from a person of his lordship's genius, and who seems fond of saying things which had not been insisted upon before, that when he thought fit to appear against the authority of the holy Scriptures, and the Christian religion, he would have managed the argument in a different manner, and to greater advantage, than had been done by others in the same cause before him. But I do not find, that, with all his sagacity and penetration, he hath advanced any thing on the argument, that can be properly called a new discovery; or that he hath given any additional force to the objections which had been urged by others, and to which sufficient answers have been made.

In that part of his Letters, in which he attempteth to expose the Scripture-history as false or uncertain, there are several things thrown in, which seem rather calculated to shew his lordship's reading, than to answer the main design he appears to have had in view. It would be no difficult matter to point to some mistakes

and inaccuracies he hath fallen into. But I have chosen for the most part to pass them by, and confine myself to those things that have a nearer relation to the argument.

Any one that is conversant with those that are called the deistical writers, must have observed, that it is very usual for them to put on an appearance of respect for Christianity, at the same time that they do all in their power to subvert it. In this his lordship hath thought fit to imitate them.

He hath sometimes expressed a seeming regard for the holy Scriptures; and hath carried it so far as to make a shew of owning the divine inspiration of some parts of them. But I believe he would have been loth to have had it thought, that he was in earnest. It is not easy to see the justice, or even the good sense, of such a conduct; since the disguise is too thin to impose upon the most unwary reader: nor can I see what end it can answer, but to give one no very good opinion of the writer's sincerity.

This justice, however, must be done to the noble author, that he hath brought the controversy relating to the divine authority of the Christian religion into a narrower compass than some others engaged in the same cause have seemed willing to do. He asserteth, that Christianity is a religion founded upon facts; and

fairly

fairly acknowlegeth, that if the facts can be proved to be true, the divine original and authority of the Christian religion are established. And what he requireth is, that these facts should be proved, as all other past facts, that are judged worthy of credit, are proved; *viz.* by good historical evidence. This bringeth the controversy to a short issue: for if it can be shewn, that the great, important facts, recorded in the evangelical writings, have been transmitted to us with as much evidence as could be reasonably expected, supposing those facts to have been really done; then, by his lordship's concessions, and according to his own way of stating the case, they are to be received as true; and consequently the Christian religion is of divine authority.

His lordship had too much sense to deny (as some have been willing to do) the certainty of all historical evidence as to past facts, or to insist upon ocular demonstration for things done in former ages. Since therefore the best way of knowing and being assured of past facts is, by authentic accounts, written and published in the age in which the facts were done; all that properly remains is, to prove the credibility and authenticity of the Gospel-records; and that they have been transmitted to us with such a degree of evidence, as may be safely depended

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upon. And notwithstanding what his lordship hath insinuated to the contrary, this hath been often done with great clearness and force, by the writers that have appeared on the behalf of Christianity. What is offered in this way in the following Reflections, will, I hope, be judged sufficient; though I have done little more than point to the heads of things, which might easily have been enlarged upon, if I had not been afraid of swelling these Reflections to too great a bulk.

The chief danger to be apprehended from his lordship's book, appears to me to arise from the contemptuous insinuations he has thrown out against Christianity, as if it could not bear the light, or stand the test of an impartial inquiry; and as if every man of sense that examines into first principles without prejudice, must immediately see through the delusion. This, from a man of his lordship's known abilities, and fine taste, may be apt to do mischief among those, who, without any uncommon abilities, or giving themselves the trouble of much thinking, yet want to pass for persons of extraordinary penetration, and raised above vulgar prejudices. But if authority were to decide this cause, it were easy to produce, on the side of Christianity, many great names of persons, whose learning and good sense, and eminent merit,

merit, are universally acknowledged. I shall not mention any thing of the *Clergy* on this account, because they might perhaps be excepted against: though, if extensive knowledge and learning, if depth of thought, and exactness of judgment, if great candour and probity of manners, or if fineness of genius, and elegance of taste, in polite literature, might recommend them as fit to judge in these matters; many of them might be named, so confessedly eminent in all these respects, as would render them ornaments to any profession in the world. But it may not be improper to mention some illustrious *Laymen*, who have either professedly written in defence of Christianity, and the holy Scriptures, or have, in their writings, shewn an high esteem and veneration for them. Of foreigners, among many that might be mentioned to advantage, I shall only take notice of the Lord *Du Plessis Moruay*, who was both a very wise statesman, and eminently learned; the celebrated Monsieur *Pascal*, one of the finest writers, and greatest genius's, of the last age; that extraordinary man *Grotius*, not easily to be paralleled for force and extent of genius, as well as variety of learning; those great men the Barons *Puffendorf* and *Ezekiel Spanheim*, the latter peculiarly eminent for his acquaintance with the *belles lettres*, and refined taste in the politer

parts

parts of learning. To these might be added many excellent persons of our own nation, such as *Lord Bacon*, *Mr. Selden*, *Sir Charles Walsely*, *Sir Matthew Hale*, the honourable *Robert Boyle*, *Mr. Locke*, *Sir Isaac Newton*, *Mr. Addison*, *Mr. Forbes* the late Lord President of *Scotland*. I believe there are few but would think it an honour to be ranked with these illustrious names, some of them remarkable for their eminent station and figure in the world, and great political abilities; and all of them justly admired for the extent of their learning and knowlege, the solidity of their judgment, or correctness of their taste. And I cannot help, on this occasion, mentioning two gentlemen now living, of acknowledged learning and fine sense, who have distinguished themselves by their writings in defence of Christianity; *Sir George Lyttelton*, and *Mr. West*.

No man needs therefore be apprehensive, as if his appearing to shew a zeal for Christianity, might be looked upon as a reflection upon his understanding, or as a mark of a narrow and bigotted way of thinking; since it cannot be denied, that some of the wisest men, the greatest genius's, and exactest reasoners, of the age, have been persons that professed an high regard for the Christian religion. And the same might, I doubt not, be said of numbers of gentlemen now living, of eminent abilities, and distin-

guished worth, who might be mentioned with great honour, though they have had no occasion of appearing in the world as writers. But the controversy is not to be decided by the authority of great names. Christianity doth not stand in need of that support. It standeth fixed on its own solid basis; and only requireth to be considered with an attention suitable to its vast importance. It hath nothing to fear from a true freedom of thought, from deep reasoning, and impartial inquiry. What it hath most to apprehend, is a thoughtless levity and inattention of mind, and an absolute indifferency to all religion, and to all inquiries about it. It is no easy matter to prevail with those to think closely in such a case as this, who are under the power of sensual affections and appetites, who are sunk in *Indolence* and a *Love of Ease*, or carried off with a perpetual hurry of *Diversions* and *Amusements*, or engaged in the warm pursuits of *Ambition* or *Avarice*. But surely, if the voice of reason is to be heard, and if there be any thing at all that deserveth a serious attention, it is this. The inquiry whether Christianity be true, and of a divine original, or not, is a matter of high importance, and upon which a great deal dependeth. The Gospel itself most certainly representeth it so. If Christianity be true and divine, those to whom

whom it is published, and who have an opportunity of inquiring into it, and yet neglect to do so, can never be able to justify their conduct to the great Ruler and Judge of the world. It cannot with any consistency be supposed, that if God hath sent his Son into the world, to bring a clear revelation of his will, and to guide men in the way of salvation, it is a matter of indifferency whether those to whom it is offered, and made known, pay any regard to this signification of the divine will or not, or comply with the terms which are there prescribed. And therefore for such persons to reject it at a venture, without giving themselves the trouble of a serious inquiry, or to continue in a wilful negligence and careless suspense of mind in a matter of such vast consequence, is a most unaccountable and inexcusable conduct, altogether unworthy of reasonable, thinking beings.

Let Christianity therefore be carefully examined. Let the evidence for the facts on which its divine authority is supported, be coolly and impartially considered, whether it is not as much as could be reasonably desired, supposing those facts were true, and which would be accounted sufficient in any other case. Let the original records of Christianity be inquired into, whether they have not the characters of genuine simplicity,

simplicity, integrity, and a sincere regard to truth ; and whether they have not been transmitted to us with an evidence equal or superior to what can be produced for any other writings whatsoever. Let the nature and tendency of the religion itself be considered ; whether the idea there given us of the Deity be not such as tendeth to render him both most amiable and most venerable, to fill our hearts with a superlative love to God as having given the most amazing proofs of his wonderful love and goodness towards mankind, and at the same time with a sacred awe and reverence of him as the wise and righteous Governor of the world, a lover of order, and an hater of vice and wickedness ; whether its precepts be not unquestionably pure and holy, and such as, if faithfully complied with, would raise our natures to an high degree of moral excellence ; whether the uniform tendency of the whole scheme of religion there held forth to us, be not to promote the honour of God, and the good of mankind, and the cause of piety, righteousness, and virtue, in the world ; to engage us to worship God with a pure adoration and devotion, to deal justly, kindly, and equitably, with all men, and to subdue the sensual irregular affections and lusts, and keep them within proper bounds. Superstition, and false devotion, have frequently
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put men upon unnatural and excessive rigours and austerities; but Christianity, like the blessed Author of it, keeps clear of all extremes. It abridgeth us of no pleasures within the bounds of purity and innocence: nor doth it oblige us to extinguish our natural appetites and passions, but to govern and moderate them, and preserve them in a regular subjection to reason, and the law of the mind: and certainly it is necessary for our own quiet and happiness, and for the good order of society, that we should do so. And finally, let it be considered, whether any motives could possibly be exhibited more powerful and engaging, than those which the Gospel setteth before us. It proposeth the noblest models for our imitation, God himself, in his imitable moral excellencies; and his well-beloved Son, the most perfect image of his own goodness and purity. It displayeth all the charms and attractions of redeeming grace and love to allure us. It giveth the greatest encouragement to sinners to repent, and forsake their evil ways; and promiseth the most gracious assistances to help our infirmities, and to strengthen our weak, but sincere, endeavours in the performance of our duty. It raiseth us to the most glorious *prospects*, and sublime *hopes*, than which nothing can possibly have an happier tendency to engage us to a patient continuance in

in well doing, amidst the many difficulties and temptations of this present state. The *Rewards* it proposeth are such as are fitted to animate holy and generous souls, and to produce, not a servile and mercenary frame of spirit, but a true greatness of mind; *viz.* an happiness consisting in the perfection of our natures, in a conformity to God, and the eternal enjoyment of him, and in the pure pleasures of society and friendship with glorious angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect. And on the other hand, to make an impression upon those that are insensible to the charms and beauty of virtue, it maketh the most lively and affecting representations of the *Terrors* of the wrath to come, and the *Punishments* that shall be executed in a future state upon those that obstinately persist in a course of presumptuous sin and disobedience.

This is an imperfect sketch of the nature and design of Christianity, as laid down in the Gospel. In this view let it be considered, and not be unjustly charged, as it hath often been, with corruptions that are only owing to a deviation from its original purity; or with the practices of those, who, though they make a profession of believing it, allow themselves in courses which it forbids and condemns. What an happy world would this be, if men could be
more

more generally persuaded to yield a willing subjection to its divine authority, and to comply with its true spirit and design, and to give up themselves to be governed by its excellent precepts, and important motives!

What then can those propose that take pains to turn men from such a religion as this, and to weaken or subvert the evidences of its divine authority? Can they pretend to introduce a more pure and sublime morality, or to enforce it with more powerful motives? Do they propose to render men more holy and virtuous, more pious and devout towards God, more just and kind and benevolent towards men, more temperate and careful in the due government of their appetites and passions, than the Gospel requireth and obligeth them to be? Do they intend to advance the interests of virtue by depriving it of its most effectual encouragements and supports, or to exalt the joys of good men by weakening their hopes of everlasting happiness, or to restrain and reclaim the wicked and vicious by freeing them from the fears of future punishment?

There is a great complaint of a growing *dissoluteness* of manners, and of a general *corruption*. His lordship representeth this in the most lively terms; but, instead of ascribing it to the proper causes, he is for laying the whole load

load of it on the present establishment. Far from directing to the proper cure, he hath done what he could to take away that which would be the most effectual remedy, the influence of Christianity on the minds and consciences of men. When the *restraints* of religion are once taken off, what can be expected, but that they should abandon themselves to the conduct of their passions? *Human Laws* and *penalties* will be found to be weak ties, where there is no fear of God, nor regard to a future state, or the powers of the world to come. In proportion as a *neglect* or *contempt* of religion groweth amongst us, a *dissoluteness* of morals will prevail; and when once this becometh *general* among a people, *true probity* and *virtue*, a *right public spirit*, and *generous concern for the real interests of our country*, will be *extinguished*. Surely then all that wish well to the good order of society, and to the happiness of mankind, ought to wish, that true uncorrupted Christianity should generally obtain and prevail; and that men should not only heartily believe, but seriously consider it, and endeavour to get it wrought into the very frame and temper of their souls. For Christianity is not a mere outward form and profession, but a living principle, of a practical nature and tendency. And it is not enough to have a specula-

tive notion and belief of it, but we must consider it with that attention which becometh us, and do what we can to enforce its excellent doctrines and motives upon our own hearts.

This subject hath carried me to a greater length than I at first intended : but I hope it will not be thought improper to the occasion. I shall only add, that though the principal design of the following remarks on the late lord *Bolingbroke's* Letters is to take notice of those passages in them which relate to Christianity, and the holy Scriptures, the reader will meet with other reflections of a miscellaneous kind, and some that are of a political nature. In these last I may perhaps be thought to have gone a little out of my province. And I must confess, that I am not fond of appearing in the world under the character of a political writer. For this reason several things have been omitted upon the review, which I had actually prepared for farther detecting the misrepresentations and inconsistencies which I thought I saw in some parts of his Letters, especially that long one, which is the first of the second volume. Nor should I have meddled with these matters at all, if it had not been from a desire to contribute to the obviating some prejudices which these Letters have a tendency to raise or strengthen in the minds of some persons, both

against the present government, and against their fellow-subjects; and I think it should be the earnest desire of every true Christian, and lover of his country, that all should be united in a steady and well-regulated zeal for our holy religion, and for that establishment on which, under God, the security of our most valuable civil and religious liberties doth in a great measure depend,

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REFLECTIONS

On the Late

Lord BOLINGBROKE'S LETTERS.

PART I.

On the Study and Use of HISTORY.

 HE late Lord *Bolingbroke* has generally obtained the reputation of being one of the finest writers in our language. This hath procured him a kind of authority in the world, which makes way for an easy and favourable reception of any thing that is published under his name. A writer possessed of such talents hath it in his power to be signally serviceable to religion, and the true interest of his country; and on the other hand, there is scarce any thing of more pernicious influence than such talents misapplied. When the public was first informed of Letters written by him on the Study and Use of History, it was natural to expect something very entertaining and improve-

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ing from such an author on such a subject. And it will not be denied, that he has many good and some very curious observations, expressed in a very genteel manner, and with great elegance and purity of stile : but these are interspersed with others of a very different kind, and of a dangerous tendency.

In these letters his lordship has done what he could to expose the authority of the Scriptures to contempt ; and at the same time has made the most disadvantageous representation of the present state of the government and constitution of his country. If we are to trust the accounts he giveth us, Christianity hath no real foundation of truth in fact to depend upon ; it hath been upheld by superstition, ignorance, and imposture ; and hath been visibly decaying ever since the revival of learning and knowlege. And our civil constitution, instead of being rendered better at the late revolution, hath been ever since growing worse ; and our liberties are in more real danger than they were in before. The natural tendency of such representations is to inspire a thorough contempt and disregard of the religion into which we were baptized, and to produce endless jealousies and discontents, if not open insurrections, against the government under which we live. No man therefore who hath a just zeal for either of these, can see without concern such an insolent attempt against both. And, in this case, the quality, the ability, the reputation of the writer, as it maketh the attempt more dangerous, rendereth it more necessary to guard
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against it. If an inferior writer had said all that his lordship hath advanced, it would have deserved very little notice. But there are too many that are ready almost implicitly to swallow down any thing that cometh to them recommended by a great name; especially if it be advanced with a very peremptory and decisive air. And if an author's account of himself must be taken, there perhaps scarce ever was a writer whose judgment ought to have greater weight, or who better deserves, that an almost implicit regard should be had to his dictates, than the author of these letters.—

He enters upon his first letter with declaring, that the rules he is going to recommend as necessary to be observed in the study of history, were — “very different from those which writers on the same subject have recommended, and which are commonly practised.”—But he assureth his reader (and I believe him) that — “this never gave him any distrust of them.”—And therefore he proposeth to tell his sentiments — “without any regard to the opinion and practice even of the learned world*.”—He declareth it as his opinion, that — “A creditable kind of ignorance is the whole benefit, which the generality of men, even of the most learned, reap from the study of history; which yet appears to him of all other the most proper to train us up to private and public virtue †.”— Surely then the world must be mightily obliged to an author who comes to give them instructions

* Vol. I. p. 1, 2. † Ibid. p. 15.

4. Reflections on the Late

and directions in a matter of such great importance, which the generality of men, even of the most learned, were unacquainted with before.

In his letter on the *true use of retirement and study*, he finely representeth, what — “ a desirable thing it must be to every thinking man, to have the opportunity indulged to so few, of living some years at least to ourselves in a state of freedom, under the laws of reason, instead of passing our whole time under those of authority and custom.” — And asks — “ Is it not worth our while to contemplate ourselves and others, and all the things of this world, once before we leave them, through the medium of pure and undefiled reason * ? ” — He observes, that — “ They who can abstract themselves from the prejudices, and habits, and pleasures, and business of the world, which, he says, is what many are, though all are not, capable of doing, may elevate their souls in retreat to an higher station, and may take from thence such a view of the world, as the second *Scipio* took in his dream from the seats of the blessed.” — That this will enable them to — “ distinguish every degree of probability, from the lowest to the highest, and mark the difference between this and certainty, and to establish peace of mind, where alone it can rest securely, on resignation †.” — In what follows he seems to apply this to his own case. He represents himself as in a state of retirement from the world,

* Vol. II. p. 197.

† Ibid. p. 199.

Lord Bolingbroke's Letters. 5

abſtracted from its pleaſures, and diſengaged from the habits of buſineſs: though at the ſame time he declareth his reſolution *in his retreat* to contribute as much as he can to *defend and preſerve the Britiſh conſtitution of government*; for which he expected his reward from God alone, to whom he *paid this ſervice* *. He goes on to obſerve in the ſame letter, that—“ he who has “ not cultivated his reaſon young, will be utterly “ unable to improve it old.”—And that— “ not only a love of ſtudy, and a deſire of “ knowlege, muſt have grown up with us, but “ ſuch an induſtrious application likewise, as “ requires the whole vigour of the mind to be “ exerted in the purſuit of truth, through long “ trains of diſcourſe, and all thoſe dark receſſes, “ wherein man, not God, has hid it.”—And then he declares, that *this love*, and *this deſire*, he has *felt all his life*, and is *not quite a ſtranger to this induſtry and application* †.

His reflections upon Exile tend alſo to give one an high idea of the author. Speaking of the neceſſity of ſtanding watchful as centinels, to diſcover the ſecret wiles and open attacks of that capricious goddeſs Fortune before they can reach us, he adds—“ I learned this important leſſon long “ ago, and never truſted to Fortune, even while “ ſhe ſeemed to be at peace with me. The “ riches, the honours, the reputation, and all “ the advantages which her treacherous indul- “ gence poured upon me, I placed ſo, that ſhe “ might ſnatch them away without giving me

* Vol. II. p. 201, 202. † Ibid. p. 205, 206.

“ any disturbance. I kept a great interval between me and them. She took them, but she could not tear them from me*.” He frequently expresseth himself in those reflections, as one superior to fortune and exile, and that had attained to a perfect philosophic calmness and tranquillity, whose mind was not to be discomposed by any outward evils; as one who was *far from the hurry of the world, and almost an unconcerned spectator of what passes in it, and who, having paid in a public life what he owed to the present age, was resolved to pay in a private life what he owes to posterity; and who was determined to write as well as live without passion* †. And who would not be inclined to pay a vast regard to the sentiments of a great genius, that had always from his youth loved study, and desired knowlege, and to this added industry and application; who had an opportunity for retirement from the world, and knew how to improve it; and who had made use of his solitude to contemplate himself and others, and all the things of this world, through the medium of pure and undefiled reason!

But there are several things that tend to take off from that dependence one might otherwise be apt to have upon an author possessed of so many advantages.

It can scarce be denied, that there is a great appearance of vanity in these letters. A certain air of sufficiency breathes through the whole. He every-where pronounceth in a dogmatical

* Vol. II. p. 234.

† Ibid. p. 282.

and decisive way, and with a kind of dictatorial authority; and seemeth to regard himself as placed in a distinguished sphere, from whence he looketh down with superiority and contempt upon those that have hitherto passed for learned and knowing. To this may be added, what can scarce escape the notice of the commonest reader, a visible affectation of advancing something new, and which had not been thought of, or insisted upon, before. How often doth the polite author of these letters, when giving his directions, and making his observations upon the study and use of history, put his noble correspondent in mind, that they were quite different from any thing that had been observed by those learned men who had treated of this subject before him! In this I think him mistaken. But at present I only mention it as a proof of the desire he was possessed with of appearing to think in a way different from, and superior to, the rest of mankind, even of the learned world. Such a desire and affectation of novelty, and of thinking out of the common way, may lead persons of great parts astray in their inquiries after truth, and hath often done so.

But there are other passions and affections, that have a still less friendly influence, and which are apt to give a wrong byass to the mind. Such is that keenness and bitterness of spirit, which disposeth a man to find fault, and to put the most unfavourable constructions upon persons and things. I will not charge the late Lord *Bolingbroke* with having been really under the

influence of such a temper; but there are several things in his letters which have that appearance. In his reflections upon exile he layeth it down as a rule, *to live and write without passion*; he talks as if he had got above all outward evils, and had attained to a perfect tranquillity. And yet in these very reflections there are several passages that discover a very strong resentment, and great bitterness of spirit. He there intimates, that—

“ his country had reaped the benefit of his ser-
 “ vices, and he suffered for them—That the
 “ persons in opposition to whom he served, and
 “ even saved the public, conspired and accom-
 “ plished his private ruin: That these were his
 “ accusers, and the giddy ungrateful crew his
 “ judges: That art joined to malice endeavoured
 “ to make his best actions pass for crimes, and
 “ to stain his character—That for this purpose
 “ the sacred voice of the Senate was made to
 “ pronounce a lye; and those records, which
 “ ought to be the eternal monuments of truth,
 “ became the vouchers of imposture and ca-
 “ lumny *.”—This is very strongly expressed. I shall not at present inquire into the truth and justness of those reflections. I shall only observe, that this is not the language of a man who *lives and writes without passion*, or who is so *indifferent to common censure or approbation*, as he professeth himself to be †. Nor is it easy to reconcile this with that philosophic calmness, that moderation, and tranquillity of mind, which he sometimes maketh so great a shew of. There are several

* Vol. II. p. 270, 271.

† Vol. I. p. 6.

parts of his letters, as I may have occasion more distinctly to observe afterwards, in which he expresseth himself with all the rage and virulence of a passionate party-writer.

It were not so much to be wondered at, if he discovered a resentment against those whom he might apprehend to be the authors of his sufferings; but there are several things that look as if he were out of humour with mankind. Of the Critics, Chronologers, Antiquaries, and of the Learned in general, even those of them that have been in the highest reputation, he frequently expresseth the utmost contempt. He inveighs severely against the Divines, antient and modern; and represents even those of them, who, he says, may be called so without a sneer, as not sagacious or not honest enough, to make an impartial examination. The gentlemen of the Law fall under his heavy censure; and he will scarce allow, that since lord *Bacon*, and the earl of *Clarendon*, there have been any of them that have attained to any eminent degree of learning and knowlege; and he taketh upon him to foretel, that except there should come some better age, there will not be any such among them for the future. The Members of Parliament he represents as regarding the business of parliament only as a trade; that few know, and scarce any respect, the *British* constitution; and that the very idea of wit, and all that can be called taste, has been lost among the Great. Such general censures might be expected in a writer that professedly sets himself to display his talents

talents in satire and ridicule; but do not look so well in one that appeareth in a superior character, and who taketh upon him to instruct and guide, to form mens taste, and direct their conduct, and enable them to pass right judgments on persons and things. Such a temper is not a very good disposition for an impartial inquiry; it is apt to represent persons and things in a disadvantageous light, and to give a malignant tincture to the reflections: nor is it very surprising to see a writer of this turn pass harsh and severe censures, not only on the administration, but on the religion, of his country.

All the use I would make of these observations is, to keep us from suffering ourselves to be too strongly byassed in favour of a writer so distinguished by his abilities, and who putteth on such specious appearances.

I shall now proceed to a more distinct examination of Lord *Bolingbroke's* Letters.

In them we may find, as hath been already hinted, many good and fine observations relating to the study and use of history; delivered with great clearness of expression, and propriety of sentiment. His directions are full of good sense, and many of them very aptly illustrated by proper and well-chosen instances. In general, it must be allowed, that his observations concerning the usefulness of history, the advantages he ascribes to it, and the ends to be proposed in it, are, for the most part, just; but there is not much in them that can be regarded as perfectly new. I do not say this by way of disparagement,

Lord Bolingbrot's Letters. 11

paragement, to detract from the merit of his reflections : perhaps on such a subject it is scarce possible to make any observation which hath not been made by some one or other before. It is a sufficient commendation of an author, if he hath placed his reflections and observations in an agreeable and advantageous light, if he hath disposed them in a beautiful order, and illustrated his rules by proper exemplifications. But his lordship seems not to be contented with the praise of having done this. He appears to be extremely desirous to have it thought, that his observations are not only just, but new, and such as other writers have not made before him. He declareth, in a passage cited before from his first letter, that the rules he gives — “ are very
“ different from those which writers on the same
“ subject have recommended, and which are
“ commonly practised *.” — And that — “ he
“ will have no regard to the methods prescribed
“ by others, or to the opinion and practise even
“ of the learned world †.” — And he speaks to the same purpose in his third letter §. And after having declared, that the study of history will prepare us for action and observation ; and that — “ history is conversant about the past ;
“ and by knowing the things that have been,
“ we become better able to judge of the things
“ that are ” — he adds — “ This use, my lord,
“ which I make the proper and principal use of
“ the study of history, is not insisted on by those
“ who have writ concerning the method

* Vol. I. p. 1. † Ibid. p. 2. § Ibid. p. 69.

“ to be followed in this study; and since we
 “ propose different ends, we must of course
 “ take different ways *.”—He immediately sub-
 joins.—“ Few of their treatises have fallen into
 “ my hands.”—And is it not a little strange,
 that he should so positively pronounce, that
 others have not, in their treatises concerning the
 method to be followed in the study of history,
 insisted on that which he makes the proper and
 principal use of it, when at the same time he
 acknowlegeth, that few of their treatises had
 fallen into his hands? One would think by his
 way of representing it, that none before this
 noble writer had mentioned it as the proper use
 and end of history to promote our improvement
 in virtue, to make us better men and better
 citizens, to teach us by example, and to pre-
 pare us for action and observation, that by
 knowing the things that have been, we may
 become better able to judge of the things that
 are. And yet I am apt to think, that few have
 set themselves to shew the use that is to be made
 of history, the ends to be proposed in it, and
 the advantages arising from it, but have in effect
 said the same thing. And it were no hard
 matter, if it were necessary, to fill up several
 pages with quotations to this purpose, from
 authors antient and modern.

History is, no doubt, capable of being im-
 proved to excellent purposes: and yet the author
 of these letters seems sometimes to have carried
 it too far; as if history (not sacred history; for

* Vol. I. p. 67, 68.

this, with the examples it affordeth, he discards as of little or no use) were, the best, the only school of virtue, the most universal and necessary means of instruction, alone sufficient to make us good men and good citizens, and to furnish us with all the knowlege that is proper for our direction in practice. He observes, — That “ history is philosophy, teaching us by example, how to conduct ourselves in all the stations of private and public life” — And that — “ it is of all other the most proper to train us up to public and private virtue*,” — He declares, that — “ every one that is able to read, and to reflect upon what he reads, is able to make, that use of history which he recommends: and every one who makes it, will find in his degree the benefit that arises from an early acquaintance with mankind, contracted in this method †.” — He adds, that — “ we are only passengers or sojourners in this world; but we are absolute strangers at the first steps we take in it. Our guides are often ignorant, often unfaithful. But by this map of the country which history spreads before us, we may learn, if we please, to guide ourselves.” — So that history is the guide he proposeth to all men to conduct them in their journey through this world, and by which every man is capable of guiding himself in all the situations and circumstances of public and private life.

* Vol. I. p. 15, 57.

† Ib. p. 171, 172.

History is, no doubt, very useful in its proper place; but there are other means of instruction to be joined with it in order to its answering the end. It is not to serve instead of every thing, and to supersede all other methods of instruction. We stand in need of being well-seasoned and principled with a just sense of the moral differences of things, and with the excellent rules of religion, and the important considerations it setteth before us, that we may form just sentiments of things, and may make a right use of history for our improvement in virtue, and may know how properly to apply the examples it furnisheth. Accordingly our author himself insisteth upon it, that we must apply ourselves to history— “in a philosophical spirit and manner*.”— He observeth, that— “particular examples in history may be of use sometimes in particular cases, but that the application of them is dangerous.”— He would have a man therefore study history as he would study philosophy. And in the account he gives in his third letter of what is necessary in order to make a right use of history, he carrieth it so far, and really maketh the work so difficult, as to be above what can be expected from the generality of mankind; and concludeth with saying, that— “by such methods as these a man of parts may improve the study of history to its proper and principal use †.”— Where he seemeth to represent the making a right use of history as a very difficult thing, which none but men of parts

* Vol. I. p. 58. † Ib. p. 65, 66.

and of philosophic spirits are capable of, and which requireth the exactest judgment, and nicest discernment, as well as a very close application. In this passage the use and advantage of history seems to be confined within too narrow bounds, as in some of the former it had been extended too far.

As to the method to be followed in the study of history, though the author of these letters speaks with great disregard, and even contempt, of those that have written on this subject before him, yet the only one he particularly mentions is *Bodin*. He observeth, that— “ in his method “ we are to take first a general view of universal history and chronology in short abstracts, “ and then to study all particular histories and “ systems.”—— Upon which his lordship remarketh, that—— “ This would take up our “ whole lives, and leave us no time for action, “ or would make us unfit for it.*”—— And afterwards he observes, that—— “ the man “ who reads without discernment and choice, “ and, like *Bodin's* pupil, resolves to read all, will “ not have time, nor capacity neither, to do any “ thing else †.”—— But I cannot think it was *Bodin's* intention to lay it as an injunction upon his pupil to read without choice and discernment all the particular histories that have ever been published. But the meaning is, that the best and most regular way of reading and studying history is, first to take a brief general view, and survey of universal history and chronology,

* *Ib.* p. 69.

† *Ib.* p. 142, 143.

and then to proceed to the histories of particular countries, nations, and ages. And this appeareth to be a very reasonable and natural method. And if *Bodin* proposes the taking a large scope and compass in reading history, his lordship, though he seems here to blame him for it, sometimes expresseth himself in a manner that looks no less extensive: for he recommendeth the reading history of all kinds, of civilized and uncivilized, of ancient and modern nations, as necessary to give us a right knowlege of the human species, and of ourselves. He observes in his fifth letter, that — “man is the subject of
 “ every history, and to know him well, we must
 “ see him and consider him as history alone can
 “ present him to us in every age, in every coun-
 “ try, in every state, in life and in death.
 “ History therefore of all kinds, of civilized
 “ and uncivilized, of antient and modern na-
 “ tions, in short, all history that descends to a
 “ sufficient detail of human actions and charac-
 “ ters, is useful to bring us acquainted with our
 “ species, nay with ourselves*.”— And particu-
 larly, with respect to antient history, he mention-
 eth it in his second letter as a great advantage,
 that — “in antient history the beginning, the
 “ progression, and the end, appear not of parti-
 “ cular reigns, much less of particular enter-
 “ prizes, or systems of policy alone, but of go-
 “ vernments, of nations, of empires, and of all
 “ the various systems that have succeeded one
 “ another in the course of their duration †.”—

* Vol. I. p. 170.

† Ib. p. 42.

And yet he afterwards seems to confine our attention to modern history. He will allow us indeed to *read* the histories of former ages and nations, because it would be shameful to be intirely ignorant of them; but he would not have us *study* any histories, but those of the two last centuries. That these deserve a particular attention, will easily be acknowledged for several reasons; and, among others, for that which he assigns; the great change that has been brought about in the civil and ecclesiastical policy of these parts of the world since the latter end of the fifteenth century; of which he gives an elegant representation in his sixth Letter. But certainly there are many things in the histories of the preceding ages, both in other countries, and in our own, that well deserve to be not only read, but to be thoroughly considered by us; and which are capable of furnishing very useful reflections, and answering those excellent ends, for which, in the former part of these Letters, he had recommended the study of history. This might easily be shewn, if it admitted of any doubt, both with regard to civil history and ecclesiastical.

But, not to insist longer upon this, and some other observations that might be made on particular passages in these Letters, I shall proceed to what is the principal intention of these Remarks; *viz.* to consider those things in them, of which a bad use may be made, or which appear to be of a pernicious tendency: and my Remarks shall be distributed under three heads.

I shall first consider the reflections he has cast upon literature.

And then shall proceed to those passages in his Letters, which are designed to expose the holy Scriptures, and the Christian religion.

And, lastly, shall take some notice of the severe reflections he has made upon the consequences of the late Revolution, and the state of things under the present Establishment.

It may seem a little surprising, that so polite a writer, and one who, as he lets us know, always from his youth loved study and application, should yet, in several parts of these Letters, express himself in a manner that seems calculated to throw a contempt upon learning, and to put men off from applying themselves to the pursuit of it. Every friend of learning should, I think, acknowledge, that there is a regard due to those that in their several ways have contributed to promote it. But this ingenious writer takes every occasion to place them in a ridiculous or contemptible light. In his first Letter, he gives a very disadvantageous idea of those who, as he expresseth it, — “make fair copies of foul manuscripts, give the signification of hard words, and take a great deal of other grammatical pains.” — He owns indeed, that *they enable others to study with greater ease, and to purposes more useful*; but he assures us, that *they neither grow wiser nor better by study themselves*. He adds,

adds, that—— “ the obligation to these men
“ would be great indeed, if they were in gene-
“ ral able to do any thing better, and submitted
“ to this drudgery for the use of the public, as
“ some of them, it must be owned with grati-
“ tude, have done; but not later, I think, than
“ about the time of the resurrection of letters.”—
And he at length condescendeth to declare, that—
“ they deserve encouragement, whilst they con-
“ tinue to compile, and neither affect wit, nor
“ presume to reason*.” This is a very hard
censure pronounced upon all those, without dis-
tinction, that about the time of the resurrection
of letters, *i. e.* for these two centuries past, have
compiled dictionaries or glossaries, or have revis-
ed and published antient manuscripts, or correct
editions of books; or who have been employed
in explaining hard words, and in clearing obscure
passages, in antient authors, or making critical
observations upon them, and in other things of
that kind. Not content to represent them as
absolutely void of genius, and having no preten-
sions to wit or reason, and as neither wiser nor
better for their studies themselves, he will not
allow, that any of them had the public good in
view in the drudgery they submitted to. But I
scarce know a greater sign of a malignity of
temper, than a disposition to give the worst turn
to every thing, and to judge harshly of the in-
ward intentions of mens hearts, when there is
nothing in their actions to support such a judg-
ment. It were easy to name persons, that with-

* Vol. I. p. 5, 6.

in these two last centuries have employed themselves in the way he mentions, who were unquestionably men of great judgment and genius, as well as industry: or, at least, a small share of good-nature and candour would incline one to allow them the praise of having had the public utility in view in works, which, by his own acknowledgement, have greatly served the interests of learning, and contributed to the spreading of it.

But how meanly soever he thinks of the grammarians, critics, compilers of dictionaries, and revisers and publishers of manuscripts, he maketh a still more disadvantageous representation of antiquaries and chronologers. Speaking of persons that have hitherto been regarded as of great figure and eminence in the republic of letters, he avoweth — “ a thorough contempt for the whole business of their learned lives; for all the researches into antiquity, for all the systems of chronology and history, that we owe to the immense labours of a *Scaliger*, a *Borchart*, a *Petavius*, an *Usher*, and even a *Marsham* *.” — It seems very odd, for one that speaks so highly of the advantage of history, to express such a contempt for the labours of chronologers, which certainly are of great use for digesting history into its proper periods, in order to a regular and orderly conception and understanding of it. In a passage cited above, he mentioneth it among the advantages of history, especially ancient history, that we there see events as they

followed one another;— “ that there the beginning, the progression, and the end, appear, not of particular reigns, much less of particular enterprises or systems of policy alone, but of governments, of nations, of empires, and of all the various systems that have succeeded one another in the course of their duration.”——

This seems to shew the advantage, and even necessity, of chronology; and, with regard to this, the labours of a *Scaliger*, a *Petavius*, and *Usher*, are highly useful and commendable. To endeavour to digest the history of mankind, and of the principal events that have happened in the world, in a regular series, to mark the rise and fall of cities and empires, to compare and connect the histories of different countries and nations, sacred history and profane; and, in order to this, to lay together the scattered hints and fragments of different ages; is, notwithstanding his degrading representation of it, a noble employment, an employment that even a Sir *Isaac Newton* judged not to be unworthy of his great genius. One would be apt to think, that every impartial person, who hath a just value for learning, must have a great honour for those that have taken pains to set these things in a proper light; and where absolute certainty cannot be attained to, an happy conjecture may be both pleasing and useful.

In his third Letter, he findeth great fault with those that make laborious inquiries into the first originals of nations. And in his fifth Letter, he warneth the noble lord to whom he writes, to throw none of his time away, as he saith he himself

had done, in *groping in the dark in his searches into antiquity* *. He speaks with contempt of what he calls *dry registers of useless anecdotes*; and declares, that—— “ten millions of such
 “ anecdotes, though they were true; and com-
 “ plete authentic volumes of *Egyptian or Chal-*
 “ *dean, of Greek or Latin, of Gallic or British,*
 “ *of French or Saxon records*; would be of no
 “ value in his sense, because of no use towards
 “ our improvement in wisdom and virtue; if
 “ they contained nothing more than dynasties
 “ and genealogies, and a bare mention of remark-
 “ able events in the order of time, like jour-
 “ nals, chronological tables, or dry and meagre
 “ annals †.”—— But whatever opinion I may
 have of his lordship's taste, I cannot help think-
 ing, that in this he is too rigid. It seems to be a
 very natural and unblameable curiosity, to search
 as far as we can into the recesses of antiquity, and
 the originals of nations; and there is a pleasure
 even in those glimmerings of light that break
 through the obscurity, provided we do not re-
 present those things as certainties, which are on-
 ly conjectural. And I believe there are few but
 would be apt to wish, that there were—— “au-
 “ thentic volumes of *Egyptian or Chaldean,*
 “ *Greek or Latin, Gallic or British records,*”
 —— even though they were only like what he
 calls —— “dry and meagre annals,”—— or, as he
 elsewhere speaks,—— “the gazettes of antiqui-
 “ ty;”—— and contained dynasties and genea-

* Vol. I. p. 149. † Ib. p. 150.

logies, with a mention of remarkable events that happened to those nations in the order of time, like journals, or chronological tables. And if any learned man could discover such antient authentic records or monuments, few, I should think, would blame him, or think him idly employed in publishing them to the world.

It looks a little odd, that there is no kind of men for whom, throughout these Letters, he sheweth a less regard than for those that are generally accounted men of learning. Speaking of those who— “affect the reputation of great scholars, at the expence of groping all their lives in the dark mazes of antiquity,” — he says, that— “all these mistake the true design of study, and the true use of history.” — Great as the advantages are that he ascribeth to history, and which he thinks every man is capable of that is able to read, and to reflect upon what he reads, yet— “a creditable kind of ignorance is, in his opinion, the whole benefit which the generality even of the most learned reap from it.” — And he intimates, that the only effect of their reading and studying history is, to become pedants, *i. e.* as he explaineth it, — “worse than ignorant, always incapable, sometimes meddling and presuming*.” — And elsewhere he representeth the credulous learned as only employed — “in wrangling about antient traditions, and ringing different changes on the same set of bells †.”

* Vol. I. p. 14, 15, 21.

† Ib. p. 169.

To all which may be added, what he saith, in his Letter on the true use of retirement and study, concerning—— “ the scholar and philosopher, “ who, far from owning that he throws away “ his time, reproves others for doing it; that so- “ lemn mortal who abstains from the pleasures “ and declines the business of the world, that he “ may dedicate his whole time to the search “ of truth, and the improvement of know- “ lege.”—— He supposes him to have read— “ till he is become a great critic in *Latin* and “ *Greek*, in the Oriental tongues, in history and “ chronology; and not only so, but to have “ spent years in studying philosophers, commen- “ tators, rabbies, and whole legions of modern “ doctors, and to be extremely well versed in all “ that has been written concerning the nature of “ God, and of the soul of man, about matter and “ form, body and spirit, &c *.”—— And yet he pronounceth, that, notwithstanding all his learning, he is in a state of ignorance, for want of having—— “ examined the first principles, and the “ fundamental facts, on which these questions “ depend, with an absolute indifference of judg- “ ment, and scrupulous exactness †.”—— This he supposeth to be the case of—— “ many “ a great scholar, many a profound philosopher, “ many a dogmatical casuist”—— Yea, and, as appeareth from other passages in his Letters, of every learned man, of every philosopher and di- vine whatsoever, that believeth Christianity. On the other hand, he declareth concerning—— “ the

* Vol. II. p. 211, 212.

† lb. p. 213, 214.

“ man who hath passed his life in the pleasures
“ or business of the world,” — that whenever
he sets about the work of examining principles,
and judging for himself — “ concerning those
“ things that are of greatest importance to us
“ here, and may be so hereafter, he will soon
“ have the advantage over the learned philoso-
“ pher. For he will soon have secured what is
“ necessary to his happiness, and may sit down
“ in the peaceful enjoyment of that knowlege ;
“ or proceed with greater advantage and satisf-
“ faction to the acquisition of new knowlege ;
“ whilst the other continues his search after things
“ that are in their nature, to say the best of them,
“ hypothetical, precarious, and superfluous *.”

The natural tendency of these, and other reflections of a like kind, which occur in these Letters, seems to be to pour contempt upon what have been hitherto esteemed valuable branches of literature. Researches into antiquity, chronological studies, criticism and philosophy, disquisitions concerning the nature of God, the human soul, and other philosophical and theological subjects, all these are represented as of little or no use; and only a more specious kind of idleness. And if this be the case, I think it is wrong to complain of the *Goths, Vandals, Saracens*, and other barbarous nations, that burnt whole libraries, and destroyed the monuments of learning. They rid the world of a great deal of useless lumber, which tempted men to mis-spend their time and pains; and it would have been an ad-

* Vol. II. p. 216, 217.

vantage to mankind, if more of them had been destroyed: instead of being thankful to those learned persons that have taken such pains to recover and publish antient monuments, we are only to regard them as industrious triflers, to whose labours the world is very little obliged, Nor can I see, upon such a view of things, what use or need there is of seminaries of learning. But, in good earnest, can this be regarded as a proper way to mend our taste, and help forward our improvement? Such a way of thinking, if it generally obtained, would, it is to be feared, instead of producing an extraordinary refinement of taste, tend rather to sink us into ignorance and barbarism, and bring us back to the darkness of the most illiterate ages.

Taken in this view, I cannot think, that these Letters have a favourable aspect on the interests of literature. Methinks there appeareth to be no great necessity at present of warning persons not to spend their lives in laborious pursuits of learning. The prevailing turn of the age doth not seem to lie this way. Many of our gentlemen will no doubt be very well pleased to be assured, that though they pass their lives in the business or pleasures of the world, yet if they at length set themselves to examine first principles, and consult the oracle of their own reason, without any regard to the opinion of others, or troubling themselves to read the writings of philosophers or divines, they are in a more likely way of discovering truth, and making a progress in

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useful knowlege, than any of those—— “ so-
“ lemn mortals, who abstain from the plea-
“ sures and decline the business of the world,
“ that they may dedicate their whole time to
“ the search of truth, and the improvement of
“ knowledge.” —— This is certainly a very
flattering scheme, and seems to open a very short
and easy way for attaining to wisdom. When
they find a man of his lordship's fine and elegant
taste, and great talents, and who by his own ac-
count hath spent so much time and pains in
learned inquiries, pronouncing them absolutely
vain and useles; they will be very apt to take
his word for it, and not give themselves the
trouble of laborious study; the result of which
might be only filling their heads with what he
calleth *learned lumber*, and exposing them to
the ridiculous character of *pedants*, i. e. as he
describeth them,—— “ men worse than ignorant,
“ always incapable, sometimes meddling and
“ presuming.” —— Instead of such learned drudg-
ery, the more easy and delightful task of study-
ing modern history, may be sufficient to furnish
them with all the knowlege they want, and an-
swer every end of useful improvement.

But surely such a manner of representing things
is not altogether just, nor is this the most effectua-
l way of promoting real improvement in wis-
dom and virtue. Great is the extent, and wide
the field, of science. Many noble subjects there
are of inquiry, which well deserve our attention:
The desire of knowlege is the strongest in the
noblest

noblest minds; but comparatively small is the progress that a man is capable of making by his own unassisted ability, within the short compass of this present life: and therefore, be his abilities never so great, he will need the assistance of others, and ought to be very thankful for it. Many excellent persons in different ages have employed their pains this way; and a mighty advantage that man hath, who has the opportunity, and knows how to improve it, of profiting by their labours. He may, by reading, vastly increase his stock of knowlege, may meet with many valuable hints, which else would not have occurred to him, and may find important subjects set in a clearer light than otherwise he would have seen them. The author of our beings, who hath implanted in us the desire of knowlege, and fitted us for communicating our sentiments, undoubtedly designed, that, in acquiring knowlege, as well as in other things, we should be helpful to one another, and not depend merely upon ourselves. And this is the great advantage of language, and of letters. We must indeed make use of our own reason, but we ought also to take in all the helps and advantages we can get: and he that is careful to improve those helps which are afforded him, and who, without submitting implicitly to the judgments and opinions of others, endeavours to make the best use he can of their labours and studies, as well as of his own thoughts, is in a far more like-

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ly way of improving his knowlege, and will better approve himself to God, and to all wise men, than he that, from a vain confidence in his own judgment, despiseth and rejecteth those helps, and, under pretence of consulting the oracle of reason in his own breast (for, as his lordship expresseth it — “ every man's reason “ is every man's oracle”) — will not give himself the trouble to read and to examine what others have said and thought before him. Such an high conceit of a man's own capacity and judgment, such an arrogant self-sufficiency, and a contempt of the labours and judgments of others, is not a very proper disposition for finding out truth. A man of this character was *Epicurus*, who boasted that his knowlege was all of his own acquiring, and scorned to seem to be beholden to any other for his notions.

Having considered those parts of the late Lord *Bolingbroke's Letters* that seem not very favourable to the interests of literature, I shall now proceed to what is the principal design of these Remarks, to examine the reflections he has cast upon the sacred monuments of our religion. He first attacks the history of the Bible, especially as contained in the books of the Old Testament; and then proceeds to a more direct attempt upon Christianity. And this appears not to be a thing he treats of merely by the bye, but to be a point he has formally in view, and for which he professes a kind of zeal. I shall therefore consider distinctly what he hath offered.

In his third Letter on the study of history, he setteth himself to consider the state of antient history, both sacred and profane: and begins with declaring his resolution — “to speak
 “plainly and particularly in favour of common
 “sense, against an absurdity which is almost
 “sanctified *.” — After having made some observations on the state of antient profane history, and shewn, that it is full of fables, and altogether uncertain; he next comes to apply these observations to antient sacred history †. What he seems at first to propose, is, to shew, that it is — “insufficient to give us light into the
 “original of antient nations, and the history of
 “those ages we commonly call the first ages.”
 — But it is evident, that, under pretence, of shewing this, his intention is, to represent the whole history of the Bible as absolutely uncertain, and not at all to be depended upon for a just account of facts. He not only denieth, that the writers of the historical parts of the Old Testament were divinely inspired, but he will not allow them the credit that is due to any common honest historians. He represents those histories as — “delivered to us on the faith of a
 “superstitious people, among whom the custom
 “and art of lying prevailed remarkably ‡.” — and observes, that — “the Jewish history never
 “obtained any credit in the world, till Christiani-
 “anity was established §.” He sometimes ex-

* Vol. I. p. 70. † Ibid. p. 83. et seq. ‡ Ibid. p. 87.
 § Ibid. p. 91.

presseth himself, as if he were willing to allow the divine inspiration of the doctrinal and prophetic parts of the Bible, and were only for rejecting the historical. And this he pretends to be the best way to defend the authority of the Scriptures*. But it is evident, that this is only a sneer. For he was, no doubt, sensible, that the sacred history is so interwoven with the prophecies and laws, that if the former is to be regarded as lying fiction, and not at all to be depended upon, the divine authority of the other cannot be supported. And what he afterwards repeatedly affirmeth of Christianity, that the credit of its divine institution dependeth upon facts, holdeth equally concerning the Old Testament œconomy.

After having done what he can, in his third Letter, to shew the uncertainty of antient sacred as well as profane history; he begins his fourth with observing, that as—"we are apt naturally to apply to ourselves what has happened to other men; and as examples take their force from hence; so what we do not believe to have happened we shall not thus apply; and, for want of the same application, the-examples will not have the same effect."—And then he adds—"Antient history, such antient history as I have described"—[in which antient sacred history is manifestly comprehended]—"is quite unfit in this respect to answer the ends that every reasonable man should promise to

* Vol. I. p. 93, 98, 99.

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" himself in this study ; because such antient
 " history will never gain sufficient credit with
 " any reasonable man *." — And afterwards,
 speaking of antient fabulous narrations, he de-
 clares, that — " such narrations cannot make
 " the slightest momentary impressions on a mind
 " fraught with knowlege and void of super-
 " stition. Imposed by authority, and assisted
 " by artifice, the delusion hardly prevails over
 " common sense ; blind ignorance almost sees,
 " and rash superstition hesitates : nothing less
 " than enthusiasm and phrensy can give credit
 " to such histories, or apply such examples." —
 He thinks, that what he has said will — " not
 " be much controverted by any man that has
 " examined our antient traditions without pre-
 " possession : " — and that all the difference be-
 tween them, and *Amadis of Gaul*, is this, that
 — " In *Amadis of Gaul* we have a thread of
 " absurdities that lay no claim to belief ; but
 " antient traditions are an heap of fables, under
 " which some particular truths inscrutable, and
 " therefore useles to mankind, may lie con-
 " cealed, which have a just pretence to nothing
 " more " — [*i. e.* to no more credit than *Amadis*
of Gaul] — " and yet impose themselves upon
 " us, and become, under the venerable name of
 " antient history, the foundation of modern
 " fables †." He doth not directly apply this
 to the Scriptures. But no one can doubt that
 this was his intention. It is too evident, that these

* Vol. I. p. 118.

† Ibid. p. 120, 121.

are designed to be included in what he calleth
—" our antient traditions "—(a word which
he had applied several times before to the sacred
records); and which he representeth as " im-
posed by authority, and assisted by artifice."
— And I think it is scarce possible to express
a greater contempt of any writing, than he here
doth of the history of the Bible, and the ex-
amples it affords.

Lord Bolingbroke's Letters

THE SECOND LETTER

... **D** ... **R E** ...



REFLECTIONS

On the Late

LORD BOLINGBROKE'S LETTERS.

PART II.

An Examination of the principal things offered by his Lordship to invalidate the Authority and Credibility of the Sacred History.

HAVING given this general view of the author's design, I shall now proceed to a more distinct and particular examination of the principal things he hath offered to invalidate the authority of the Old Testament History. What he saith of Christianity shall be considered afterwards.

I need not take much notice of what he hath urged to shew, that the writers of the Sacred Books did not intend an universal history, or system of chronology *. I know nobody that

* Vol. I. p. 202. et seq.

supposes they did ; so that he might have spared that part of his pains. But notwithstanding the Bible was not designed for an universal history, or to exhibit a complete system of chronology, though it may be safely affirmed, that no one book in the world gives so great helps this way, it is sufficient if it gives us a true history as far as it goes, and which may be safely depended upon. This is what our author will not allow. It is manifest, that he placeth it in the same rank with the most fabulous accounts of antient times. This then is the point we are to consider. Let us therefore examine what proofs or arguments he hath brought against the truth and credit of the sacred history.

Some of the things offered by him to this purpose have scarce so much as the appearance of argument. Of this kind is what he saith concerning the use that has been made by *Jewish* Rabbies, and Christian Fathers, and *Mahometan* Doctors, of the short and imperfect accounts given by *Moses* of the times from the creation to the deluge. Let us grant, that the fables they have feigned concerning *Adam* and *Eve*, *Cain* and *Abel*, *Enoch*, *Noah*, and his sons, &c. are such as — “ *Bonzes* or *Talapains* would almost blush to relate ; ” — I do not see how this can be reasonably turned to the disadvantage of the books of *Moses*, or hurt the credit of them ; since his lordship owns, that these fables are — “ profane extensions of this part of the *Mosaic* history.” — And that history is certainly no way answerable for the additions which have

been made to it. It would have been easy for *Moses*, if he had been a fabulous writer, to have filled up this part of his history with marvelous relations, and to have embellished it with such fictions concerning our first parents, and the most antient patriarchs, as our author here referreth to : and his not having done so is a strong presumption in his favour, that he did not give way to fancy or invention, but writ down the facts as they came to him, with an unaffected simplicity. His accounts are short, because he kept close to truth, and took care to record no more of those times than he had good information of, or than was necessary to the design he had in view ; which seems principally to have been to give a brief account of the creation, the formation of the first human pair, the placing them in Paradise, the fall, and the flood, which were the most remarkable events of that period ; and to continue the line from *Adam* by *Seth* to *Noah*, as afterwards he does from him to *Abraham*.

What his lordship observes concerning the blunders of the *Jewish* chronologers *, is not much more to his purpose, except he could prove, that those blunders are chargeable upon the Scriptures ; which is so far from being true, that, if accurately examined, arguments may be brought from those very Scriptures to confute the blunders he mentions.

As to the differences he takes notice of † between the Scripture-accounts of the

* Vol. I. p. 104. † Ibid. p. 114, 115.

Affyrian empire, and those given by profane authors, *i. e.* by *Ctesias*, and them that copy from him, very able chronologers have endeavoured to shew, that those accounts may be reconciled. But if not, it would only follow, that the Scripture-history differeth from *Ctesias*, who, in his lordship's own judgment, and by the acknowledgement of the most judicious among the *Greeks* themselves, was a very fabulous writer *; and how this can be fairly thought to derogate from the credit and authority of the Sacred History, I cannot see,

But to come to those things on which he seems to lay a greater stress. The sum of what he hath offered to destroy the truth and credit of the Sacred Writings amounteth to this —
 “ That the *Jews*, upon whose faith they are
 “ delivered to us, were a people unknown to
 “ the *Greeks*, till the time of *Alexander* the
 “ Great — That they had been slaves to the
 “ *Egyptians*, *Affyrians*, *Medes*, and *Persians*, as
 “ these several empires prevailed — That a great
 “ part of them had been carried captive, and lost
 “ in the East; and the remainder were carried
 “ captive to *Babylon*, where they forgot their
 “ country, and even their language — And
 “ he intimates, that there also they lost their
 “ antient sacred books: that they were a su-
 “ perstitious people, among whom the custom
 “ and art of pious lying prevailed remarkably —
 “ That the original of the Scriptures was com-
 “ piled in their own country, and, as it were,

* Vol. I. p. 76. 80.

“ out of the sight of the rest of the world —
 “ That the *Jewish* history never obtained any
 “ credit till Christianity was established; but
 “ though both *Jews* and Christians hold the
 “ same books in great veneration, yet each con-
 “ demns the other for not understanding, or for
 “ abusing them — That the accidents which
 “ have happened to alter the text of the Bible
 “ shew, that it could not have been originally
 “ given by divine inspiration; and that they
 “ are come down to us broken and confused,
 “ full of additions, interpolations, and transpo-
 “ sitions — That they are nothing more than
 “ compilations of old traditions, and abridg-
 “ ments of old records made in later times —
 “ And that *Jews* and Christians differ among
 “ themselves concerning almost every point that
 “ is necessary to establish the authority of those
 “ books. He concludes with some observations
 “ on the curse said to be pronounced by *Noah*
 “ upon *Canaan*, which he would have pass for
 “ an absurd fiction of the writer of the book
 “ of *Genesis*; and he seemeth to have singled
 “ out this as one of the properest instances he
 “ could find for exposing the Scripture.” —

Let us consider these things distinctly.

It is no just prejudice against the credit of the
 Scripture-history, that the *Jews*, among whom
 those writings were preserved, and whose affairs
 are there recorded, were, as appeareth from
 those writings — “ Slaves to the *Egyptians*,
 “ *Assyrians*, *Medes*, and *Persians*, as these several
 “ empires

“ empires prevailed *.”—It rather furnisheth a proof of the truth and impartiality of those records, that they give an undisguised account, not only of the flourishing times of their state; for there were times in which they were flourishing, free, and independent; but of their disgraces, defeats, captivities, and all the calamities that besel them, which, according to these accounts, were in a way of just punishment for their national iniquities, their disobedience and ingratitude. Yet under all these various revolutions their nation was never intirely lost, nor incorporated with their conquerors. Though many of them revolted, still there was a number of them that with an unalterable zeal and constancy adhered to their antient religion and laws, which they regarded as of a divine original; a religion remarkably distinct from that of the nations to which they were subjected, and, on the account of which, they were frequently exposed to hatred, persecution, and reproach.

If the *Jews* were unknown to the *Greeks* before *Alexander* the Great, this affordeth not the least probable presumption, that their antient history is not to be depended upon. The *Greeks*, by this author's own acknowledgement, did not begin to write history till very late. The knowlege they had of other nations was very narrow and confined. And, particularly, they were in a great measure strangers to the languages, laws, customs, and history, of the eastern nations. He himself observes, that after the times of

* Vol. I. p. 84.

Alexander the Great, and even long after the *Jewish* Scriptures were translated into *Greek*, the *Jews*, and their history, were neglected by them, and continued to be almost as much unknown as before*. And yet certain it is, that the *Jews* were then a considerable people, and that the *Greeks* had many opportunities of being acquainted with them. Let us grant what he insinuates, that this was owing, not to want of curiosity in the *Greeks*, since—"they were, as he observes, inquisitive to the highest degree, and published as many idle traditions of other nations as of their own †"—but to the contempt they had for the *Jews*. What can be inferred from thence? Doth it follow, that the *Jewish* Scriptures are not authentic, nor their histories to be credited, because the *Greeks* neglected or despised them, and did not own their authority? This is easily accounted for by any one that considers the nature of the *Jewish* institutions. It is not to be wondered at, that a people so excessively vain as the *Greeks*, and who looked upon the rest of the world as *Barbarians*, should conceive an aversion or contempt for a nation whose laws and religion were so different from their own, among whom all image-worship was most expressly prohibited, and no adoration was paid to inferior deities, in which the religion of the *Greeks*, and of which they were extremely fond, principally consisted. If the *Jewish* sacred books had contained strange stories of the exploits of their gods, of their genealogies, battles,

* Vol. I. p. 90.

† Ibid. p. 88.

and amours, or traditions that tended to support a system of idolatry, the *Greeks* undoubtedly would have been ready enough to transcribe these things into their writings; these fables would have been suited to their taste, But it cannot be supposed, that they should pay any regard to the accounts given of extraordinary miraculous facts, that were designed to establish and give sanction to a constitution, the manifest tendency of which was to condemn and subvert that idolatrous worship, to which they were so excessively addicted.

Among all the heathen nations none expressed a greater enmity to the *Jews* than the *Egyptians*, who were themselves of all people the most stupidly idolatrous. One of their writers, *Apion* of *Alexandria*, is particularly mentioned by our author as having — “spoken of the *Jews* in a manner neither much to their honour, nor to that of their histories.” — This seems to have recommended him to his lordship's favour; for he speaks of him as a man — “of much erudition, and as having passed for a curious, a laborious, and learned antiquary” — though he owns, that he passed also — “for a vain and noisy pedant*.” — But if we may judge of him by the fragments of his work, which *Josephus* has given us, he was, with regard to the *Jews*, an ignorant and malicious writer, who does not appear to have been acquainted with their histories and laws, though he pretended to write against them; and might so easily have

procured information, if he had desired it. And this appears to have been the case of several others of the heathen writers that mention the *Jews*. They seem not to have given themselves the trouble to make any diligent inquiry into their history or laws, as delivered by themselves, but took up with idle reports and traditions to their prejudice: and yet in the accounts given of the *Jews* by the heathen writers, imperfect as they are, there are some valuable hints and traces to be discerned, which shew the falshood of other things they report concerning them*.

It is therefore a little odd, that such a stress should be laid upon this, that—"the *Jewish* history never obtained any credit in the world, till Christianity was established:"—*i. e.* it obtained no credit among the heathen nations; or, as he elsewhere expresseth it—"we do not find, that the authority of these books prevailed

* There is an heathen writer of a very different character from *Apion*, who gives a much more candid account of the *Jewish* nation; I mean the judicious *Strabo*, of whom our author himself speaks with the highest esteem. He makes the cause of *Moses's* forsaking *Egypt* to be his being dissatisfied with the false notions of God, and his worship, that had obtained among the *Egyptians*; and supposes him to have entertained juster and nobler notions of the Divinity than the *Egyptians*, or *Libyans*, or *Greeks*: that with him went from *Egypt* many that honoured the Deity, πολλοὶ τιμῶντες τὸ Θεῖον; that he persuaded many good men, and brought them unto the country where *Jerusalem* is built; and that there they continued practising justice or righteousness, and being truly religious, or sincere worshippers of God, δικαιοπραγῶντες καὶ εὐσεβεῖς ὡς ἀληθῶς ὄντες, but that afterwards they degenerated.—See *Strabo*. lib. xvi.

" among

“ among the pagan world *.” — How could it be expected, that it should? Since the heathens could not acknowledge it, and continue heathens; for it was absolutely subversive of the whole system of paganism. The authority of those books was believed and received among all those, by whom it could be reasonably expected that it should be believed and received: that is, it was acknowledged and received by that nation among whom those writings, and the memory of the laws and facts, had been constantly preserved, and who regarded them with great veneration, as of a divine original; and also by those among the heathens themselves, who, upon the credit of the *Jewish* religion, laws, and records, quitted the heathen idolatry: and these were all that could be reasonably expected to acknowledge the authority of the *Jewish* sacred books, even supposing their authority to have been never so well founded.

But it is urged as a ground of suspicion against the *Jewish* Scriptures, that—“ they were compiled in their own country, and, as it were, out of the sight of the rest of the world.” — And it was certainly most proper, that the books in which their laws, and the most remarkable events relating to their nation, are recorded, should be published in their own country, the scene where the chief actions were laid. This is no diminution of their credit, but the contrary. And if they had been compiled in any other country, or by foreigners, and persons not

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of their own nation, it might have been said, and not without some appearance of reason, that they might be mistaken, and take up with wrong and imperfect accounts, both of laws and facts.

But what this author seems chiefly to insist upon, to shew that little credit is to be given to these writings, is — “that they are histories delivered to us on the faith of a superstitious people; among whom the custom and art of pious lying prevailed remarkably *.”

In order to form a proper judgment of this matter, let us take a brief view of the *Jewish* Scriptures, that we may see what likelihood there is of their having been feigned by a superstitious and lying people.

In general, it may be observed, that if we compare the sacred books of the *Jews* with those of any other the most admired nations, such as *Greece* and *Rome*, we shall soon see a most striking and amazing difference. Their whole constitution was of a peculiar nature; so vastly different from that of other countries, that it well deserveth the attention and admiration of every impartial and considering observer. It was the only constitution in the world, where the acknowledgement and worship of the one true God, the sovereign Lord of the universe, and of him alone, is made the fundamental maxim of their state, and principle of their government, in which all their laws centre, and the main end to which they are all directed.

* Vol. I. p. 87.

All worship of inferior deities is forbidden ; no deified heroes admitted ; no images suffered. Many of their sacred rites seem to have been instituted in a designed opposition to those of the neighbouring nations, that they might not incorporate with them, or learn their idolatrous customs, to which the *Israelites*, for a long time, were very prone. Nor is there any likelihood that they would have embraced or submitted to a constitution so different from the then generally prevailing idolatry, if it had not been for the manifest proofs that were given them of its divine original. The author of these letters indeed intimates, that many of their rites were derived from the *Egyptians* ; but whatever conformity there might be in some particular instances, nothing is more certain and evident, than that the whole system of the *Jewish* religion was most essentially opposite to that of the *Egyptians*, and other pagan nations ; and tended to cast contempt on their adored deities, and on that idolatrous worship to which the heathens were so much addicted, and which was established by the laws of their respective countries.

As to the moral and devotional treatises, which make up another part of their sacred writings, they are incontestably excellent. Their poetry is of a most divine strain, far superior to that of other antient nations, having an unexampled dignity, elevation, and sublimity, in it, filled with the noblest sentiments of the Divinity, and of his glorious incomparable perfections, and governing providence.

The same observation may be made on the prophetical writings, in which we may discern many remarkable characters of genuine truth and purity. A fervent zeal for God, and for pure and undefiled religion, every-where appears: nor is there any thing in them that breathes the spirit of this world, or that favours of ambition, artifice, or imposture. The whole intention of them is manifestly to reclaim the people from idolatry, vice, and wickedness, to engage them to the pure worship of God, and to the practice of universal righteousness. With a noble freedom and impartiality do they reprove their kings, princes, priests, people; denouncing the most awful threatenings against them, if they should persist in their evil and sinful courses; and encouraging them with the most gracious promises to repentance, and new obedience: and all this mixed with many remarkable and express predictions of future events, which no human sagacity could have foreseen, and which derived such an authority to them, that tho' they were often reproached and persecuted when alive, their character and writings were afterwards regarded by the whole nation with the profoundest veneration. And it deserveth to be particularly remarked, that whereas the *Jews*, as well as mankind, in all ages, have been prone to place religion chiefly in external forms, and ritual observances, as if these would compensate for the neglect of the moral precepts, there are many passages in their sacred books, especially those of the prophets, which in the strongest terms represent

present the utter insufficiency of all ritual observances without real holiness of heart and life; and even speak of them in a very diminutive manner, and with a seeming contempt, when opposed to, or abstracted from, moral goodness and virtue; and such writings certainly do not look like the inventions of a superstitious and lying people.

But as the sacred history is what this writer setteth himself particularly to expose and invalidate, let us take a brief view of the historical parts of Scripture; and these are no less remarkable, and worthy of our attention, than the laws, the prophecies, the moral and devotional writings.

As to a general idea of their history, it is of as different a complexion from that of other nations as their laws, and is of the same noble tendency with their other sacred books. It everywhere breathes the profoundest veneration for the Deity. The chief design of it is not merely to answer civil or political views, or to preserve the annals of their nation, or trace it up to its original, though this also is done, but for nobler purposes; to promote the true worship of God, and the practice of piety and virtue; to preserve the remembrance of God's wonderful works of providence towards his professing people; to shew the favours, the blessings, the deliverances, vouchsafed to them, the prosperity and happiness they enjoyed, when they kept close to the laws of God, and continued in the practice of virtue and righteousness; and on the other hand, the
great

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great calamities which beset them, when they broke the divine law and covenant, and lapsed into idolatry, vice, and wickedness. Such are the useful lessons which their history is designed to teach, and to this excellent end is it directed.

To which it may be added, that there are observable in it remarkable characters of simplicity, and an impartial regard to truth. It is plain, from the whole tenor of their history, that it was not compiled to give false and flattering accounts of their nation, or partial and elegant encomiums of their great men. Their great actions indeed are recorded, but their faults are also related with a simplicity and impartiality that deserves to be admired. Neither *Romans*, *Greeks*, *Egyptians*, nor any other people, have formed their histories so much to the disadvantage of their own nation, or charged them with such repeated revolts from the religion and laws of their country. Let us suppose the *Jews* never so much possessed with the spirit of lying, it would never have put them upon forging a body of history so much to the prejudice of their own national character. It tendeth indeed to give an high idea of the great things God had done for them, of the privileges conferred upon them, and the excellency of their laws (and that their laws are excellent, no man can doubt that seriously reads and considers them), but at the same time it setteth the ingratitude, the disobedience, the stupidity, of that people, their opposition to God's authority, and abuse of his goodness, their manifold backslidings and un-

steadfastness

steadfastness in his covenant, in the strongest light. Their disgraces, defeats, captivities, are nowhere concealed; they are represented as frequently brought under the yoke of the neighbouring nations in a manner much to their dishonour; and their deliverances are ascribed, not to their own wisdom, conduct, and bravery, but to the mercy of God, upon their repentance. In a word, their history is a continued account of God's goodness, patience, and justice, exercised towards them; and of their own strange, perverse, and unaccountable conduct. This is so manifest, that it hath been often turned to their reproach, and hath given occasion to the representing them as an obstinate, ungrateful, and rebellious race, and to such a charge as St. *Stephen* advanceth against them from their own Scriptures: *Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?* Acts vii. 51. These considerations naturally tend to derive a peculiar credit to the *Jewish* Scriptures, as containing true and faithful accounts, not forged by a superstitious lying people. Whatever opinion therefore we may have of the *Jews*, yet their Sacred Books deserve great regard. Nor is there any ground to suppose, that these books or records were of their inventing. At least, I believe, this will scarce be pretended with regard to the *Jews* in the latter times of their state, however they might otherwise be addicted to fiction and embellishment. They received these books as

sacred from their ancestors, and were themselves so fully persuaded of the divine original and authority of their laws, and the certainty and authenticity of these records, that they adhered to them with a zeal scarce to be paralleled in any other nation: so great was the veneration they had for them, that after the canon was completed, they were extremely scrupulous not to make any additions to their Sacred Books, or receive any others into their number as of equal authority, though written by the greatest and wisest men of their nation. And if any persons had endeavoured to alter or corrupt them, the fraud, the imposture, must have been immediately detected. For these Sacred Books were not, like those of other nations, confined to the priests only; they were in the hands of the people, constantly and publicly read in their synagogues; the laws, and the facts, were what they were all acquainted with, and instructed in, from their infancy.

If therefore there be any ground of suspicion, it must fall, not upon the latter *Jews*, but upon *EZRA*, and those by whom the sacred canon was finished. If their history and Sacred Books were forged or corrupted, the most likely time that can be fixed upon for it is upon their return from the *Babylonish* captivity. And this seems to be the æra fixed upon by the author of these Letters. He observes — that “the *Babylonish* captivity lasted so long, and such circumstances, whatever they were, accompanied it; that the captives forgot their country, and
“ even

“ even their language, the *Hebrew* dialect, at least, and character *.” — And afterwards, he intimates, that the Scriptures were — “ lost during the captivity †.” — And he observes, that — “ *Ezra* began, and *Simon* the Just finished, “ the canon of the Scriptures ‡.” —

Let us grant, that in the *Babylonish* captivity, the *Jews* learned the *Chaldee* language, which thenceforth became more familiar to them than the *Hebrew*; and that the old *Hebrew* character was, as many learned men suppose, though it is far from being certain, changed for the *Chaldee*; the latter being fairer, easier, and more generally used among the people; yet this is far from proving, either that the *Hebrew* language was intirely forgotten by them, or that their Sacred Books were lost in the captivity. There are many things that plainly shew the contrary. The prophet *EZEKIEL*, who prophesied during the captivity to the *Jews* in *Chaldea*, writ and published his prophecies in *Hebrew*. So did the prophets *HAGGAI*, *ZECHARIAH*, and *MALACHI*, who prophesied several years after the return from the *Babylonish* captivity: which shews, that the *Hebrew* language was still in use, and was understood by many of the people. The same thing may be concluded from this; that all the Sacred Books that were written after the captivity were written in *Hebrew*, except a part of *EZRA* and *DANIEL*. *NEHEMIAH*, who had been a great man in the *Persian* court, writ his own memoirs in *Hebrew*: which shews, that the *Jews* who

* Vol. I. p. 84. † Ibid. p. 101. ‡ Ibid. p. 85.

continued in *Persia*, their great men at least, still retained the knowlege of that language. And as the *Hebrew* language was not absolutely forgotten among the *Jews* in their captivity, so neither were their Sacred Books intirely lost. Indced it were absurd to suppose it. That captivity, though it lasted seventy years from the first beginning of it under *Jehoiakim*, yet from the time of the utter desolation of *Jerusalem*, and the temple, and the carrying away the last remainder of the people to *Babylon*, continued but about fifty years. And there were not a few of them that had been carried away from *Jerusalem*, who survived the whole time, and lived to come back. *Many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were antient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of the second house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice, Ezra iii. 12.* All those among them that lived to seventy or eighty years were twenty or thirty years old when *Jerusalem* and the *Temple* were destroyed; and to suppose, that these should intirely forget their language, or their religion, history, and laws, is very absurd. Add to this, that the people were in expectation of a deliverance, and restitution to their own land, of which the prophets had assured them; and this would naturally make them more careful to preserve their laws, and the antient authentic records and memorials of their nation. It appeareth from the accounts given of those that returned, that many of the *Priests* the *Levites*, the *Singers*, the *Porters*,
the

the *Netbinims*, &c. had preserved their genealogies during the captivity, in prospect of their return, and of their being again employed in the sacred functions; and those who could not clearly shew their genealogies, were put from the priesthood, *Ezra* ii. 62. *Neb.* vii. 64. Great numbers of the people could also prove their genealogies: and where there were any that could not do this, it is particularly taken notice of, that *they could not shew their fathers house*, *Ezra* ii. 59. It is manifest therefore, that there were *registers* of genealogies preserved in *Babylon*; and is it not reasonable to conclude, that they would be no less careful to preserve their Sacred Books, especially those of *Moses*, in which were their original records, and the laws on which their whole constitution depended?

If the *Jews* had been for changing their own laws and customs, we may suppose it must have been in order to their adopting those of their conquerors, and of the country to which they were transplanted, and in which they settled. But it is evident, that, in fact, they did not do this; since the whole system of their worship and constitution was, upon their return, very different from that of the *Babylonians*. If therefore they learned their language, or used their letters and characters in writing; yet still it is certain, that they worshiped not their gods, nor adopted their religion, and sacred rites. They still preserved their own; and the captivity and desolation of their nation, which they looked upon as

a punishment for their manifold revolts, idolatries, and deviations from their law, tended to increase, instead of extinguishing, their veneration for it.

By DANIEL'S solemn supplication and fasting, when the time came that had been marked out in the prophecies for their return, it appeareth, that he had the book of JEREMIAH'S Prophecies before him, *Dan. ix. 2.* And the confession he there maketh is remarkable: *All Israel have transgressed thy law—therefore the curse is come upon us; and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him—And he hath confirmed his words which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us—As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us, ver. 11, 12, 13.* Here it is plainly supposed, that there was a written law of *Moses* extant in his time, known to him and to the people, and which was regarded as the law of God himself: that they had transgressed that law, and thereby had exposed themselves to the dreadful judgments denounced against them, and written in that law, as the just punishment of their revolt and disobedience. Soon after this, when the people returned, under the conduct of ZERUBBABEL, JESHUA, and others, we find them gathered together to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, in the seventh month, and offering the *daily burnt-offerings*, and those of the *new-moons*, and *set feasts*, besides *free will offerings*: and all this is said to be done as *written in the law of Moses*, *Ezra iii. 1—6.* and
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this plainly sheweth, that they had the written law of *Moses* with them. They also appointed the Priests and *Levites*, in their several courses, and the Singers, and service of the temple, according to the ordinances of *David the man of God*, Ezra iii. 10, 11. The sacred hymns or psalms, therefore, that had been used in the temple-worship, were not lost in the captivity; and indeed the Psalms of *David* carry evident characters of genuineness in them. They were many of them composed on special occasions, and adapted to his peculiar circumstances, in a manner which plainly sheweth they were not forged in after-times. And the preserving so many of the psalms and hymns, some of which contain an abridgment of their sacred history, is a manifest indication of the care they took; and that there was not a general destruction of their Sacred Books in the captivity. The same observation may be applied to the prophetic writings, and to their sacred records. It is plain, that the history of their kings was preserved; to which there is frequent reference in books compiled after the *Babylonish* captivity.

The commission afterwards given to EZRA by ARTAXERXES, plainly supposed the law of *Moses* to be then in being, and in the highest authority; and only empowered him to regulate every thing according to that law. He is described in *Artaxerxes's* commission as a ready scribe in the law of *Moses*; as one greatly skilled in that law; and fit to instruct others in it; and is required to set magistrates and judges to judge

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the people, such as *knew the Law of God*, Ezra vii. 6. 10. 25 Soon after EZRA came NEHEMIAH, a great man in the *Persian court*, and who was appointed governor of *Judea*; and every thing throughout his book discovereth, that he and the whole people professed the highest veneration for the law of *Moses*. Before he came to *Judea*, he was well acquainted with that law, and regarded it as of divine authority; *Neb. i. 7, 8, 9*. During his administration, we have an account of a solemn reading of the Law, by *Ezra*, in the hearing of all the people; who heard it with the utmost reverence and attention: in this he was assisted by several *Levites*, who read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading, *Neb. viii. 1—9* Again, we are told of another solemn reading of the Law, before all the people, *Neb. ix. 1, 2, 3*. And in the admirable confession made on that account by the *Levites*, there is an excellent summary of the principal events recorded in the historical parts of the books of *Moses*; such as, the calling of *Abraham*; their bondage and oppression in *Egypt*; their being brought out from thence with signs and wonders, and dreadful judgments executed upon *Pharaoh* and his people; the dividing of the sea before them, so that they passed through it as on dry land, whilst the *Egyptians* that pursued them were overwhelmed in the deep; the promulgation of the law at *Sinai*, with remarkable tokens of the divine presence and glory; the miracles wrought in the *Wilderness*,

the leading them by a cloud in the day, and a pillar of fire by night; the giving them manna-bread from heaven to eat, and cleaving the rock to give them water to drink; and finally, bringing them into possession of the land of *Canaan*. These things, which are the most remarkable facts in the history of their nation, together with their frequent rebellions, disobedience, and ingratitude, particularly their making and worshipping the molten calf in the Wilderness, the standing disgrace of their nation, and their subsequent revolts, calamities, and deliverances, after they came into the land of *Canaan*, are there taken notice of in the public confessions and acknowledgements made to God in the name and presence of all the people; and are mentioned as things commonly known and acknowledged among them, and as of undoubted truth and certainty.

Taking these things together, it seems to appear, with all the evidence which the nature of the thing is capable of, that the *Jewish* sacred books and records were not lost in the *Babylonish* captivity; that they were in possession of them, and had them in great veneration, before *Ezra* came to *Jerusalem*. And it would be a wild imagination to suppose, that he had it in his power, even if he had it in his inclination, so far to impose upon all the *Jews*, both those in *Judea*, and those that continued in *Babylon*, and other parts of the *Persian* empire, as to make them all with one consent receive those for their antient laws, by which their nation had been always governed,

verned, which were not their antient laws; and those for their antient authentic histories, and sacred records, which were not the antient authentic records. All that his commission from *Artaxerxes* extended to was, to order things according to the law of *Moses*; and this he effected. When he came, he found several abuses contrary to that law, countenanced by men of great power and interest, and in which several of the chief priests, as well as numbers of the people, were engaged; and he set himself to reform them according to that law: and these regulations would not have been tamely submitted to, if it had not been well known, that the laws and constitutions he urged upon them, were the true original laws of *Moses*.

As to the establishing the sacred canon, which is attributed to *EZRA*, and to those whom the *Jews* call the men of the great synagogue; the last of whom was *SIMON THE JUST*; this is not to be understood as if these books were not accounted sacred, or were regarded as of no authority before. The books were already well known, and looked upon as sacred; they had not their authority, because *EZRA* acknowledged them; but he collected and published them, because they were known to be authentic. It may indeed be well supposed, that faults and variations might have crept into the copies of those books; and that they needed to be carefully revised. And this was a work for which *EZRA* was admirably fitted by his great skill in the law, and in the sacred records of his nation, as well as his noted
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Integrity. And if he accordingly revised the original Sacred Books, and published a more correct edition of them, or abridged some of their antient records, to render them of more general use among the people, and here and there inserted some passages for explaining and illustrating things that were grown obscure; this was certainly a work of great use. And supposing him to have done this, and that this work continued to be afterwards carried on by some of the most knowing and excellent men of their nation, till it was with great care completed, I do not see how it in the least affects the authority or credibility of those books. The whole nation in general were so sensible of EZRA'S great fidelity and diligence, that he was always afterwards had in the highest honour; and they were so convinced, that these were the original Sacred Books, that they received them with an extraordinary veneration. Nor did they ever pay the same regard to any other subsequent writings in their own nation. And though the SANHEDRIM continued to have great authority among them, they never pretended to put any other books upon them as divine, or as of equal authority with the Sacred Books. Now how comes it, that they put so great a difference between them, and that the authority of these books was universally acknowledged by the whole nation, and the other not? This sheweth, that however credulous the *Jews* might be in other things, yet they were particularly exact and scrupulous in not receiving any books into the sacred canon

canon, but what they judged they had good reason to look upon as authentic.

The most remarkable part of the *Jewish* history is, that which is contained in the books of *Moses*. It is there we have an account of the first constitution of their sacred polity; the promulgation of the ten commandments, with the most amazing demonstrations of a divine power and majesty; and the extraordinary miraculous facts done in *Egypt*, and in the *Wilderness*, by which the authority of that law was established. And whosoever alloweth this part of the *Jewish* history to be authentic, will not much scruple the subsequent parts of their history. Now it is evident, that as it was not *EZRA* that gave authority to the law of *Moses*, which was in the highest authority before, or who caused the people to receive it as divine; so neither were the *facts*, whereby the authority of that law was attested, *first* published by him. They had been all along believed, and the remembrance of them kept up, among the people. *The books of Moses* exhibit a remarkable intermixture of *laws* and *facts*: and it appears to be so from the beginning, though our author insinuates the contrary, but gives no reason for it*. And it was wisely ordered, that the facts should go along with the laws; several of which suppose those facts, and have a manifest relation to them. And as the laws were received with great veneration, so the facts were equally received and believed among the people, in all ages, from the time in which

* Vol. I. p. 100.

those laws were given. And it deserveth to be remarked, that the facts were of such a kind, that they could not have been imposed upon the people, however stupid we suppose them to have been, at the time the laws were given, if they had not been true. If MOSES had only told the *Israelites*, as MAHOMET did the *Arabians*, instead of working miracles before them, as they demanded, of a journey he made to heaven, where he received the law; or as *Numa* did the antient *Romans*, of conferences he had with the Goddess *Egeria* in a wood or grove, to which no other persons were witnesses, and which depended intirely upon his own word; this might have administred ground of suspicion, that he only feigned a divine commission, the more effectually to enforce his laws upon an ignorant and superstitious people. But he took a quite different method. The facts he relateth, and upon the credit of which the divine authority of his laws is rested, were of a most public nature, done in open view before the people, of which they were all said to be witnesses, and in which therefore, if they had not been true, it would have been the easiest thing in the world to have detected him. And indeed, considering the stubborn disposition of the people, and their great proneness to idolatry, it can scarce be conceived, that they would have received or submitted to such a law and constitution, if they themselves had not been assured of the truth of those facts whereby the divinity of it was confirmed. In the admirable recapitulation of the law,

law, contained in the book of *Deuteronomy*, which carrieth as strong evidences of genuine *antiquity*, *simplicity*, and *integrity*, as any writings can possibly have, and in which he delivereth himself with an inimitable gravity, dignity, and authority, mixed with the most affectionate tenderness and concern, as becometh the lawgiver and father of his people, and exhorteth them to the observation of the law in the most pathetic and engaging manner; there is a constant reference to the great and extraordinary facts wrought in *Egypt*, and in the *Wilderness*; an appeal is made to the people, concerning them, as things which they themselves had seen and known. And never was there greater care taken to preserve a remembrance of any laws and facts than there was of these. He delivered the book of the law, containing an account both of laws and facts, not only to the *priests*, but to *all the elders of Israel*, the heads of the several tribes, before his death. And the original of the law was deposited in the sides of the ark, in the most holy place. A most solemn charge was laid upon the people, in the name of God, as they valued his favour, and their own happiness, frequently to consider those laws and facts themselves, and to teach them diligently to their children. Sacred rites were instituted, and public festivals appointed, to preserve the memorials of the principal facts, from the time in which those facts were done. And accordingly the remembrance of them was constantly preserved among them in all ages. In all the succeeding monuments of
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their nation, throughout their whole history, and in their devotional and prophetic writings, and in their public solemn forms of confession and thanksgiving, there was still a constant reference to those facts as of undoubted credit; and upon the credit of those facts, those laws were both at first received, and continued afterwards to be acknowledged and submitted to: for notwithstanding the frequent defections of the people to the idolatrous rites and customs of the neighbouring nations, yet they never totally and universally apostatized from the law of *Moses*, but still acknowledged its sacredness and divine authority*.

The author of these letters taketh particular notice of the fables invented by the *Hellenistic Jews*, to authorize the *Greek* version of the *Hebrew* Scriptures †. But I do not see how any argument can be fairly drawn from these fables to the prejudice of the Sacred Books themselves, which were thus translated, or to destroy their authority or credibility. The strong persuasion they had of the divine authority of the original Scriptures, might make the *Jews* at *Alexandria* more ready to entertain stories in favour of the translation of these Scriptures into *Greek*, from

* That the law of *Moses*, with the facts there recorded, may be traced, from the time in which that law was given, and the facts done, through all the succeeding ages of the *Jewish* nation; and that we have all the evidence of their having been transmitted without any material corruption or alteration, that can be reasonably desired; I have elsewhere more fully shewn in the *Answer to Christianity as old as the creation*, Vol. II. chap. 4.

† Vol. I. p. 85, 86.

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which they found great benefit; this being the language they best understood, and which was then become of general use. But those stories were not generally received by the *Jewish* nation, though they all universally agreed in acknowledging the authority of the originals; nor were they ever inserted in the sacred writings, or in any books, the authority of which was generally received among them.

The first thing that gave rise to those stories was, the history of *Aristeas*; which seems to have been contrived on purpose to do honour to that version, and gives a pompous account of it. And yet even in that history there is nothing said of those miraculous circumstances, which were afterwards invented to shew, that those interpreters were under an extraordinary divine guidance. On the contrary, that book, though it be the foundation of all that is said concerning the Septuagint, may be proved to be plainly inconsistent with those subsequent fables and fictions; and is sufficient to detect the falsity of them. There is therefore no parallel at all between these *Hellenistical* fables, and the sacred *Hebrew* records; except it could be proved, that one part of those antient records is inconsistent with other subsequent parts of them, and furnisheth manifest proofs of their falshood; which neither his lordship, nor any other, has been able to shew.

Another argument, on which he seems to lay a mighty stress, in order to set aside the authority of the Scripture, is drawn from the accidents that have happened to the sacred text.

He will not allow the answer made by *Abbadie* and others, that— “such accidents could not have been prevented without a perpetual standing miracle, and that a perpetual standing miracle is not in the order of Providence.” On the contrary, it seems evident to him, that if the Scriptures had been originally given by divine inspiration, — “either such accidents would not have happened, or the Scriptures would have been preserved intirely in their genuine purity, notwithstanding these accidents.”— He thinks the proof of this— “is obvious and easy, according to our clearest and most distinct ideas of wisdom, and moral fitness*.” But, besides that the present question, as he has managed it, relating to the sacred history, is not about the divine inspiration of it; but whether it be a true and faithful history, an honest and credible relation of facts, which he absolutely denies; I see no consequence at all in his way of reasoning, even if the question were, whether those sacred books were originally written by persons divinely inspired. For all that could be reasonably concluded, supposing any books to have been originally given by divine inspiration, is, that Providence would take care, that those books should be transmitted with a sufficient degree of certainty and integrity, to answer the end for which they were originally intended. But it was no way necessary to this purpose, that all the transcribers that should ever copy those writings in

any age or nation, should be under an infallible guidance, so as to be kept by an extraordinary interposition from ever committing any mistake or blunder, or being guilty of any slips or negligences; or that all those that have ever revised and compared those copies, should, in every instance, be infallibly guided in their judgments concerning them. This is evidently absurd. It would be a multiplying miracles without necessity; and would therefore be unworthy of the divine wisdom, and not very consistent with the methods of God's moral government of men, considered as reasonable creatures, free agents. For, will any man, in good earnest, undertake to prove, that, supposing an excellent revelation given of doctrines, laws, &c. together with authentic accounts of extraordinary facts, tending to confirm and establish the divine authority of those doctrines and laws, this revelation could not be of any use, nor could those accounts of facts be at all fit to be depended on, if there were any variations, omissions, transpositions, or mistakes, in any copies that should be taken of them in any age? If, notwithstanding those variations, the copies should still so far agree, that from thence a sufficient notion might be formed of the doctrines and laws contained in that original revelation, and of the truth of the facts whereby it was attested and confirmed; this would be sufficient to answer the end which we might suppose the divine wisdom to have had in view in giving such a revelation. And this is actually the case with regard to the
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holy Scriptures. Whatever *additions, interpolations, or transpositions*, may be supposed to have crept into any of the copies, yet all the main laws and facts are still preserved. Of this we have a remarkable proof, by comparing the *Hebrew and Samaritan* codes of the Pentateuch. There are differences between them: but the laws, the precepts, the history, the important facts, whereby the law was attested, are the same in both. And, in general, it may be justly affirmed, that notwithstanding all the differences in the copies, about which such a clamour hath been raised, yet there is a sufficient agreement among them to satisfy us, that such and such laws were originally given, such prophecies were delivered, and that such facts were done. And the variations among the copies in smaller matters, the mistakes that have crept into the genealogies, numbers, dates, catalogues of names, ages of some of the patriarchs, and the like (and it is in these things that the differences principally lie), do really confirm their harmony in the main; and therefore are far from destroying the authority of the Sacred Writings, or the credibility of the Scripture-history.

The learned *Capellus*, who had thoroughly considered this matter, and who, it is well known, allowed himself great liberties in judging concerning the variations in the copies of the *Hebrew* Scriptures, justly observeth, in his defence of his *Critica Sacra*, that all these variations are of little or no moment as to faith or manners; so that in that respect it is indifferent which read-

ing we follow: *Sanè omnes illæ varietates, uti sæpius in Critica Sacra repeto, nullius aut penè nullius sunt quoad fidem et mores momenti, ut eo respectu perinde sit hanc an illam sequaris lectionem.* And I believe there are few competent and impartial judges of these things, but will be ready to own, with Mr. *Le Clerc*, the freedom of whose judgment in such matters must be acknowledged, that, through the good providence of God, no books, from the earliest antiquity, have come to us equally correct with the Sacred Books of the *Hebrews*, particularly the *Masoretical* copies. *Nullos libros ex ultima antiquitate ad nos Dei beneficio pervenisse æquè emendatos ac sacros Hebræorum codices; et quidem Masoreticos.* See his *Dissertatio de Lingua Hebræa*, prefixed to his *Commentary on the Pentateuch*.

What our author himself maketh a shew of granting is very true, that—— “amidst all the
 “ changes and chances to which the books, in
 “ which they are recorded, have been exposed,
 “ neither original writer, nor later compilers,
 “ have been suffered to make any essential alterations, such as would have falsified the
 “ law of God, and the principles of the *Jewish*
 “ and *Christian* religion, in any of those divine
 “ fundamental points*.”— And indeed the precepts, the doctrines of religion inculcated in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, are so frequently repeated, and the principal facts there related are so often referred to, in different parts of

* Vol. I. p. 97, 98.

those Sacred Volumes, as to be abundantly sufficient to answer the design for which they were originally intended; *viz.* to instruct men in the knowlege, adoration, and obedience of the one true God, and to engage them to the practice of righteousness, and to prepare the way for a more perfect dispensation, which was to be introduced in the fulness of time, by THAT DIVINE PERSON, whose coming, character, offices, sufferings, glory, and kingdom, were there prefigured and foretold. Accordingly our SAVIOUR speaketh of the writings of *Moses* and the *Prophets*, as of signal use to instruct and direct men in the knowlege and practice of religion, *Luke* xvi. 29, 30, 31. And though it be not true, which our author asserteth, that the *Jewish* Scriptures had no authority but what they derived from Christianity (for they had an authority founded upon sufficient credentials before Christianity was established); yet their being acknowledged as divine, by Christ and his Apostles, giveth them a farther confirmation: For when a subsequent revelation, which is itself founded on convincing proofs and evidences, giveth testimony to a prior revelation, and referreth to it as of divine authority, when both together concur to form one system of religion, and to exhibit the history of God's various dispensations towards his church, the former being subservient and preparatory to the latter, and the latter giving farther light, and a fuller completion, to the former; this confirmeth the authority of both, and sheweth one great uniform de-

sign and plan carried on by the divine wisdom and goodness from the beginning.

It is no just objection against the authority of the Sacred Books of the Old Testament, though the writer of these Letters seems to think it so, that— “ though *Jews* and Christians hold the same books in great veneration, yet each condemns the other for not understanding, or for abusing them*.” This is to be understood, not of the Sacred History, which yet he would be thought to have particularly in view; for, as to this, the *Jews* and Christians are generally agreed; but of some passages in the prophetic writings, in the interpretation of which they differ. And, with respect to these, it may be observed, that if the *Jews*, at the time of our Saviour’s appearing, had universally interpreted the prophetic writings as the Christians do, and applied them to Jesus Christ; and had accordingly turned Christians, and embraced *Jesus* as the MESSIAH promised to their fathers; it would undoubtedly have been alleged, that they forged or corrupted the prophecies in favour of the Christian system; whereas now there is no room for this pretence. Their vouching and acknowledging those writings, as of divine authority, notwithstanding the difficulty they have been put to, in answering the arguments brought from thence against their own favourite notions and prejudices, giveth their testimony to the prophetic books great force.

There is another remarkable passage in his third Letter, which it is proper to take some notice of. He observes*, that—— “ the Jews and Christians differ among themselves, and from one another, concerning almost every point that is necessary to be known, and agreed upon, in order to establish the authority of books which both have received as authentic and sacred. Who were the authors of these Scriptures, when they were published, how they were composed, and preserved, or renewed; in fine, how they were lost during the captivity, and how they were retrieved after it; are all matters of controversy to this day.”

—— That the SACRED BOOKS were *not lost* in the captivity, and that consequently they were *not retrieved* after it by immediate inspiration, hath been clearly shewn. A fiction which seems to have had its rise from the apocryphal second book of *Esdras*, the authority of which never was acknowledged either in the *Jewish* or *Christian* Church. There are indeed differences, both among *Jews* and *Christians*, concerning several points relating to those Sacred Books; but these differences are, for the most part, about things that do not properly concern the divine authority or credibility of those writings. There is a general agreement among them, that the prophetic books were written by persons divinely inspired; and that the PENTATEUCH was written by MOSES, the greatest of all the pro-

* Ibid. p. 100, 101.

phets; and that the historical writings were either the very original authentic records, or faithfully compiled out of them; and were received and acknowledged by the whole nation, as containing true and just accounts of facts. And whereas he urgeth, that it is matter of controversy, who were the authors of those Scriptures; or when they were composed or published; it is certain, that, with respect to the much greater part of the Sacred Books, both *Jews* and *Christians* are generally agreed who were the authors of them.

This is true concerning all the writings of the *Prophets*, the books of *Solomon*, most of the *Psalms*, the *five books of Moses*, which have been constantly received by the *Jewish* and *Christian* church, in all ages, as written by *Moses*; though a few in these latter times have attempted to contest it. The books of *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and *Daniel*, seem plainly to shew their authors. And concerning all these, there has been a general agreement. The books therefore, concerning the authors of which there is properly any ground of controversy, are the historical books of *Joshua*, *Judges*, *Samuel*, *Kings*, and *Chronicles*. As to the first of these, *viz.* the book of *Joshua*, the ancient *Jews* in general, and the greater part of *Christian* writers, with good reason look upon it to have been written by *Joshua* himself; though there are some particular passages in it that were inserted afterwards, by way of illustration. It is principally

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pally concerning the books of *Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles*, that there is any colourable pretence for saying with our author, that they were — “ abridgments of old records made in later times *.” — Some of them seem plainly to have been compiled after the return from the *Babylonish* captivity, probably by *Ezra*, from ancient authentic records, which are frequently quoted and referred to in them as books of acknowledged credit and authority; so that there is little room to doubt of the truth and certainty of the accounts there given. For that they were faithfully extracted from those original records, to which they refer for a larger account of the things there related, there is the highest reason to believe. And it was wisely ordered, that these shorter accounts should be inserted in the sacred canon, when it was to be brought, as it were, into one volume for the lasting instruction and edification of the church. For as the sacred history was intended not merely to gratify curiosity, but to promote the purposes of religion, piety, and virtue, and to keep up the remembrance of the remarkable actings of Divine Providence towards them, both in a way of mercy and judgment according to their behaviour, it was proper that it should be brought into as narrow a compass as was consistent with that design. This would make it more generally known, and easily remembered; whereas larger and more particular accounts might have been

too voluminous for a book designed for universal use.

The only thing that yet remaineth to be considered with regard to the Sacred Books of the Old Testament is what he saith concerning the curse pronounced upon *Canaan* by *Noah*; of which we have an account, *Gen. ix. 24, 25, 26, 27.* This he seems to have fixed upon as one of the properest instances he could find to expose the authority of the Scripture. He treateth it as an invention of the writer to justify the *Israelites* in their invasion of the *Canaanites*; and representeth this curse as contradicting all our notions of order and justice; because it punisheth *Canaan*, who was innocent, for the fault of *Ham**. — “One is tempted to think, says he, that the patriarch was still drunk; and that no man in his senses could hold such language, or pass such a sentence. Certain it is, that no writer but a *Jew* could impute to the œconomy of Providence the accomplishment of such a prediction, nor make the Supreme Being the executor of such a curse.”

That *Moses* might have in view, in recording this prophecy, to raise the spirits of the *Israelites*; who were entering on a war with the *Canaanites*, is not unlikely. But this doth not prove, that he forged it. If it had been a fiction purely contrived to bring an odium upon *Canaan*, and his posterity, the story would have been otherwise formed than it is. It would not have been pretended, that *Ham*, but that *Canaan*, had been

* Vol. I. p. 110, 111, 112.

guilty of the impiety and irreverence offered towards *Noah* the second father of mankind, and repairer of the world, and who was had in great veneration. But *Moses* gave the account as he had received it. Why *Noah* passed *Ham* by without censure, and mentioned only *Canaan*; we are not told: there might be reasons for it that we do not know. Or perhaps, *Noah* said something more concerning *Ham*, and his posterity: but *Moses* takes notice only of what is said concerning *Canaan*. Nor is the malediction pronounced upon *Canaan* declared to be on account of what *Ham* had done. It is indeed related immediately after it; but it doth not follow that this was the proper cause of that curse: all that followeth from it is, that upon that occasion, and at that time, *Noah* pronounced a remarkable prediction importing favours and blessings upon *Shem* and *Japhet*, and their descendents; and that the descendents of *Canaan*, one of *Ham*'s sons, should be in a low and servile condition, subjected both to those of *Shem* and *Japhet*. It was not in a *passion*, or *drunken fit*, that *Noah* pronounced this, as his lordship seems willing to represent it; but God was pleased on that occasion to enlighten *Noah* with some view of the fates of his posterity. That part of the prediction that relates to *Shem* and *Japhet*, seems to be of a noble extent, and looks a great way forward, as many have observed, concerning which I shall not now inquire. And as to that part of the prophecy which relates to *Canaan*; it is recorded by *Moses*, that when it came to be accomplished

accomplished in *Canaan's* posterity, the hand of Providence in it might be the more distinctly observed. The *Canaanites* were not accursed of God, because *Noah* in his passion pronounced a curse upon them; but *Noah*, endued with a prophetic spirit, was enabled to foretel and pronounce the curse and punishment that should afterwards in a course of ages befall them for their wickedness. For that the true and proper ground of the punishment inflicted upon the *Canaanites* was their own execrable wickedness, is evident from many express declarations of Scripture. This wickedness of theirs God perfectly foresaw, and determined, on the account of it, to inflict exemplary punishment upon them: nor would he suffer the threatening and punishment actually to take place, till their *iniquities were full, i. e.* till their sins were arrived at the height; and, when this was the case, it tended to render the event the more remarkable, that it was foretold so long before. And perhaps one reason why there is such particular notice taken of *Canaan*, on occasion of *Ham's* impure and wicked behaviour, might be the monstrous and unnatural impurities that it was foreseen the *Canaanites, i. e. Ham's* descendents by *Canaan*, would be guilty of; and which are expressly mentioned among the causes of their ruin*.

Having examined what the late lord *Bolingbroke* hath urged against the authority and credibility of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, let us next consider the attempt he makes against

* Levit. xviii. 24, 25, 27, 28.

the authority of the New. He had indeed, whilst he expressed a great contempt of the *Jewish* Scriptures, affected to speak with a favourable regard to Christianity. But he afterwards throws off the disguise, and makes it plainly appear, that he hath as little veneration and esteem for the one as for the other. It is no great sign of his respect for Christianity, that at the same time that he does all he can to destroy the credit of the *Jewish* history, and to shew, that it is not at all to be depended upon, he declares——“ that the foundation of the Christian
 “ system is laid partly in those histories, and in
 “ the prophecies joined to them, or inserted in
 “ them *.”——But, not content with this general insinuation, he afterwards proceedeth, in his fifth Letter, to a more direct attack upon the Christian revelation †. He insisteth upon it, that the facts, upon which the authority of the Christian religion is founded, have not been proved as all historical facts, to which credit should be given, ought to be proved. He declares to the noble lord to whom he writes, that ——“ this is a
 “ matter of great moment ; and that therefore
 “ he makes no excuse for the zeal which obliges
 “ him to dwell a little on it ||.”——And after having endeavoured to shew, that——“ there re-
 “ mains at this time no standard at all of Chri-
 “ stianity ”——either in the text of Scripture, or in tradition, he argues, that——“ by conse-
 “ quence either this religion was not originally

* Vol. I. p. 91, 92.
 Ibid. p. 176.

† Ibid. from p. 174 to 185.

“ of divine institution ; or else God has not provided effectually for preserving the genuine purity of it, and the gates of hell have actually prevailed, in contradiction to his promise, against the church. He must be worse than an Atheist that affirms the last, and therefore the best effect of this reasoning that can be hoped for is, that men should fall into Theism, and subscribe to the first.” —

And accordingly he roundly declares, that —
 “ Christianity may lean on the civil and ecclesiastical power, and be supported by the forcible influence of education : but the proper force of religion, that force which subdues the mind, and awes the conscience by conviction, will be wanting *.—He adds—“ Since I have said so much on the subject in my zeal for Christianity, I will add this further. The resurrection of letters was a fatal period : the Christian system has been attacked, and wounded too, very severely since that time †.” —

And again, speaking of those of the clergy who act for spiritual, not temporal ends, and are desirous, that men should believe and practice the doctrines of Christianity, he saith, that—“ they will feel and own the weight of the considerations he offers; and will agree, that however the people have been, or may be, amused, yet Christianity has been in decay ever since the resurrection of letters †.” —
 This is an odd proof of his pretended *zeal for*

* Vol. I. p. 180, 181, 182. † Ibid. p. 182. † Ibid. p. 185.

Christianity, to insinuate that all good and honest divines will agree with him, that Christianity has been losing ground ever since the revival of learning and knowlege; as if it could not bear the light, and only subsisted by darkness and ignorance. It will help farther to shew his design in this, if we compare it with what he saith in his sixth Letter †; where he mentions the resurrection of letters, after the art of printing had been invented, as one of the principal causes that contributed to the diminution of the papal authority and usurpations. And he observes, that — “as soon as the means of acquiring and spreading information grew common, it is no wonder that a system was unravelled, which could not have been woven with success in any age, but those of gross ignorance, and credulous superstition.” — We may see by this what a compliment he designs to Christianity, when he represents it as having received a fatal blow at the resurrection of letters, and as having been in decay ever since. He plainly puts it on a level with the papal authority and usurpation, and supposes the same of Christianity that he does of popery, that it was a system which could only have been woven in the ages of ignorance and superstition, which owed its reception and prevalency to times of darkness, and has been decaying ever since the means of acquiring and spreading information grew common.

This may suffice to shew the respect that the writer of these Letters bears to Christianity. Before I enter on a distinct examination of what he hath offered, I would observe, that he endeavoureth to prepare his way by declaiming, for several pages together, against the priests, divines, and ecclesiastical historians, on the account of that spirit of lying that hath prevailed among them in all ages*. But he himself well observes and proves, in opposition to an historical Pyrrhonism, that though there have been abundance of lyes and false history put upon the world, this ought not to diminish the credit of the true. And therefore the frauds and falshoods of many that have professed a zeal for Christianity, ought to be no prejudice against the authority of the New Testament, or the credibility of the facts on which it is supported, provided it can be shewn, that these facts come to us with a sufficient degree of evidence to make it reasonable for us to receive them as true.

If, as he asserts—"numberless fables have been invented to support Judaism and Christianity; and for this purpose false history as well as false miracles have been employed;"—it is certain, that no persons have taken greater pains, or been more successful in their attempts to detect and expose such frauds, and false history, than Christian divines and critics; many of whom have exercised themselves this way with great judgment and impartiality, as being sensible, that Christianity needeth no such supports; and that

* Vol. I. p. 123. et seq.

such frauds dishonour the cause they are intended to serve. If we examine the New Testament, we shall find no encouragement there given to such methods. A remarkable simplicity, and impartial regard to truth, every-where appear. And to lye for the glory of God, or to *do evil that good may come* of it, is there most expressly condemned. It was when men began to fall from the true original spirit of Christianity, and, not content with the simplicity of religion as Christ and his Apostles left it, attempted to bring in innovations, additions, alterations in the Christian doctrine and worship, it was then that fraud and imposture, or a foolish credulity, began to prevail, and grew more and more, the farther they removed from the first and purest ages. And it is capable of a clear proof, that it was principally in favour of those corrupt additions, and abuses of Christianity, that false history and false miracles have been artfully contrived, and zealously propagated. And why should it be turned to the disadvantage of the gospel history or miracles, that history has been corrupted and falsified in favour of doctrines or practices, *e. g.* the *invocation of saints*, the *worship of images, relics, &c.* which Christianity has not countenanced or authorized? To which it may be added, that it is plainly foretold in the New Testament, that there should be a great APOSTASY from the purity of religion, and that the corruption should be introduced, and carried on, by *signs, and lying wonders*. And if this hath actually been the case, instead of furnishing

a proper objection against true original Christianity, it affordeth a manifest proof of the perfect foreknowledge of its divine Author.

He seems to lay a great stress upon it, that—
 “ the church has had this advantage over her
 “ adversaries.—that the works of those who
 “ have written against her have been destroyed,
 “ and whatever she advanced to justify herself,
 “ and to defame her adversaries, is preserved in
 “ her annals, and the writings of her doctors*.

“ — And he takes particular notice of *Gregory*
 “ the Great's proclaiming war to all heathen
 “ learning, in order to promote Christian verity †.”

But it is certain, that the humour of destroying the heathen writings never generally obtained in the Christian church. On the contrary, it was principally owing to Christians, that so many of those writings have been transmitted to us. The *Mahometans*, and some of the barbarous nations, destroyed *libraries*, and monuments of learning, where-ever they came. But it is a matter of fact not to be contested, that great numbers of heathen writings and monuments have been preserved; by Christians they have been preserved; and from thence the learned have been able to give an ample account of their *religion, rites, laws, and history*. And this is so far from being a disadvantage to Christianity, that great use hath been made of the heathen learning to serve and promote the Christian cause. The emperor *JULIAN* was so sensible of this, that he formed a design of modelling the schools so, that the

* Vol. I. p. 127, 128.

† Ibid. p. 131.

Christians should not be acquainted with the heathen writers. As to the books that have been written against Christianity *, it is possible that the ill-judged zeal of some Christians may have occasioned the loss of some of them : but I am apt to think it was owing, in most instances, to the same causes and accidents, to which we must attribute the loss of so many antient monuments, and admired writings, not only of the heathens, but of eminent fathers, and antient writers of the Christian church. Many celebrated apologies for Christianity, and books in defence of religion, have been lost ; when, on the contrary, the works even of *Lucretius*, a system of *Epicurism*, the life of *Apollonius Tyaneus*, and others of the like sort, have come down to our times.

These insinuations do not properly come up to the main point. But in his fifth Letter, under pretence of giving advice to divines, and shewing, that it is incumbent upon them to apply themselves to the study of history, he sets him-

* The heathen writings against Christianity seem not to have been much esteemed among the pagans themselves ; and this may be one reason why they were not very carefully preserved. There is a remarkable passage of *Chrysostom*, to this purpose, who in a discourse addressed to the heathens observes, That the philosophers, and famous rhetoricians, who wrote against Christianity, had only rendered themselves ridiculous : that they had not been able to persuade any one among so many people, either wise or simple, man or woman : that the books written by them were had in such contempt, that they disappeared almost as soon as they were published ; and that if any of them were preserved, it was among Christians that one might find them. *Chryf. Tom. II. p. 539. Edit. Bened.*

self more directly to attack the authority of the Christian religion, and to subvert, as far as in him lieth, the foundations on which the proof of its divine original depends. And the course of his reasoning is plainly this: that Christianity is wholly founded upon facts; and that those facts do not come to us with a sufficient degree of evidence to be relied on: they have not been proved as matters of fact ought to be proved. He declares, that—"it has been long matter of astonishment to him, that Christian divines, those of them that can be called so without a snicer, could take so much silly pains to establish mystery on metaphysics, revelation on philosophy, and matters of fact on abstract reasoning. A religion founded on the authority of a divine mission, confirmed by prophecies and miracles, appeals to facts: and the facts must be proved, as all other facts that pass for authentic, are proved. If they are thus proved, the religion will prevail without the assistance of so much profound reasoning: if they are not thus proved, the authority of it will sink in the world, even with this assistance *."—He therefore blames the divines for using improper proofs in their disputes with Theists. He asks—"What do they mean to din improper proofs in ears that are open to proper proofs?"—Thus it is that he characterizes the Deists; and afterwards he describes them as persons—"of minds candid, but not implicit; willing to be informed, but

* Vol. I. p. 175.

"curious to examine *." But how different is the account he giveth even of the most learned Christians! He affirms, that — "they have not been hitherto impartial enough, or sagacious enough, to take an accurate examination of the Jewish and Christian system, or have not been honest enough to communicate it ||." —

This is a very severe and confident censure. There have been many persons, not only among divines, but among the laity, of distinguished eminence for probity and virtue, as well as for learning and judgment, and who, to speak modestly, were in these respects no way inferior to the late Lord *Bolingbroke*, that have professed to examine, with all the attention they were capable of, and with an earnest desire of knowing the truth, the evidences of the Jewish and Christian system: but because, as the result of their inquiries, they were confirmed in the belief of the divine original of the Jewish and Christian revelation, therefore, in his judgment, not one of them was honest or sagacious enough to make an accurate examination: and I apprehend they have no other way of obtaining the character of sagacity or impartiality from writers of this cast, but by renouncing Christianity. If they do this, they shall be allowed to be sagacious and impartial inquirers; but otherwise, they must be content to have their judgment or honesty call'd in question. But if we may judge, by the writings of the Deists that have hitherto appeared, not excepting those of his lordship,

* Vol. I. p. 179.

|| Ibid. p. 181.

they have not given very favourable indications, either of an uncommon sagacity, or of a candid and impartial inquiry.

He tells the noble lord to whom he writes,—
 “ You will find reason perhaps to think as I do,
 “ that it is high time the clergy in all Christian
 “ communions should join their forces, and
 “ establish those historical facts, which are the
 “ foundations of the whole system, on clear
 “ and unquestionable historical authority, such
 “ as they require in all cases of moment from
 “ others, and reject candidly what cannot be thus
 “ established *.”—

Christian divines have frequently done what his lordship blames them for not doing. The facts on which the Christian system is founded, relate principally to what is recorded in the writings of the New Testament concerning the *holy life*, and excellent *character*, of our blessed *Saviour*, his admirable *discourses*, the many illustrious *miracles* he performed during the course of his personal ministry in proof of his divine mission, his *resurrection* from the dead, and consequent *exaltation*, the extraordinary *effusion of the Holy Ghost* upon his disciples, and the miraculous attestations that were given to his Apostles, and the first publishers of the Christian revelation. The question is, what reason have we to think that those facts were really done? His lordship requires, that these facts should be proved, as all other facts that pass for authentic are proved; and that divines should establish the

* Vol. I. p. 183.

credit of those facts on clear and unquestionable historical authority, such as they require in all cases of moment from others. The Christian divines are willing to join issue on this point. The best, the properest way of proving the truth of antient facts is undoubtedly by authentic accounts published in the age in which the facts were done, and transmitted with sufficient marks of credibility to our own times. And several things are to be consider'd, in order to our judging whether, and how far, those accounts may be depended on. — If the facts there related were of a public nature, done for the most part in *open* view, and for which an appeal is made to numbers of witnesses: — if the accounts of those facts were given by persons that were perfectly well acquainted with the facts, and who, having had full opportunity to know them, were themselves absolutely persuaded of the truth and reality of those facts: — if they appear from their whole character to have been persons of great probity, and undesigned simplicity, and who could have no worldly interest to serve by feigning or disguising those facts; and if their prejudices had not any tendency to bias them in favour of those facts, but the contrary: — if the writings themselves have all the characters of genuine simplicity, and an impartial regard to truth, that can be reasonably desired: — and if they can be clearly traced from the age in which they were written, and the facts were said to be done, through the succeeding ages, to our own times: — and finally, if it is undeniably evident,

that there were surprising effects produced in the very age in which the facts were said to be done, and which cannot otherwise be accounted for, than by allowing the truth of those facts, and the effects of which continue to this day:—where these several circumstances concur, they lay a just foundation for receiving the accounts given of facts as true. — According to the justest rules of criticism, such accounts of facts may be depended on: and many facts are generally received and believed, that fall greatly short of this evidence.

Now it is capable of being proved, it has been often proved with great clearness and strength, that all these circumstances concur in relation to the important facts on which the Christian system is founded. The facts themselves were, for the most part, done in open view, and of which there were many witnesses. Christ's whole personal ministry was a very public thing. The scene of it was not laid in a dark obscure corner, nor was it carried on merely in a private way. His admirable discourses were, for the most part, deliver'd, and his miracles wrought, in places of the most public concourse, before great multitudes of people, and even before his enemies themselves, and those who were most strongly prejudiced against him. Many of his wonderful works are represented as having been done at *Jerusalem*, at the time of their solemn festivals, when there was a vast concourse of people from all parts. The same may be said of the remarkable circumstances which attended his crucifixion,

crucifixion, the earthquake, the splitting of the rock, the extraordinary preternatural darkness that cover'd the whole land for the space of three hours, &c. which things happen'd at the time of the Jewish passover; and could not have been imposed upon the people of that age, if they had not been known to be incontestably true. And the relating such things was, in effect, appealing to thousands of witnesses. And though Jesus did not appear publicly after his resurrection to all the people; yet, besides that he shew'd himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, to his Apostles and others, who best knew him, and were therefore most capable of judging that it was he himself, and not another; and was seen even by five hundred at once, who all concurr'd in their testimony; besides this, the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost upon his disciples on the day of *Pentecost*, which was the most illustrious confirmation of his resurrection and ascension, is represented to have been of the most public nature, in the presence of vast multitudes then gather'd together at *Jerusalem* from all parts of the world. To which it may be added, that many of the miracles that were wrought in the name, and by the power, of a risen Jesus, and which were so many additional proofs of his resurrection, were also done in open view, before great numbers of people. The accounts of these facts were written and published in the very age in which the facts were done, and the laws and doctrines deliver'd which are there recorded, and by persons who appear

appear to have been perfectly acquainted with the things they relate, and fully persuaded of the truth of them. And many of the facts were of such a nature, and so circumstanced, that they could not be deceived in them, allowing them to have had their senses, which I think it is but reasonable to suppose.

The writers of these accounts appear to have been persons of plain sense, and of great probity and simplicity, and to have had a sincere regard to truth. They write without art, without passion, or any of that heat which enthusiasm is wont to inspire. They take no pains to prepossess or captivate the reader; but content themselves with a plain simple narration of facts, without ornament, amplification, or disguise. They relate, with a calm simplicity, and in a manner that hath not the least sign of an overheated imagination, Christ's wonderful actions, and excellent discourses, without interposing any reflections of their own. With the same coolness they relate the bitter censures, the scoffs and reproaches, that were cast upon him by his adversaries, and the grievous and ignominious sufferings he endured, without expressing their indignation against the authors of them. And it is observable, that they do not represent him, as one might be apt to expect they would have done, as triumphing over those sufferings with an exulting bravery, but rather as manifesting great tenderness of heart and sensibility under them, though mixed with a remarkable constancy and resignation.

It is a farther proof of that impartial regard to truth, which is observable in the writers of those accounts, that, though some of them were Apostles themselves, and others their special friends and intimates, yet they relate, without disguise, things which seem to bear hard upon their characters. They relate not only the lowness and meanness of their condition and circumstances, but their ignorance, their dulness of apprehension, the weakness of their faith, the power of their prejudices, their vain ambition, and contentions among themselves who should be the greatest, the reproofs they received from their Lord, their cowardly forsaking him in his last sufferings, and particularly the shameful fall of *Peter*, one of the chief of them, and his denial of his Lord and matter, with the aggravating circumstances that attended it. They have not attempted to conceal any of these things, which they might easily have done, or to excuse or disguise them; than which nothing could better shew their impartiality, and love of truth.

It farther strengthens the credit of their relations, when it is consider'd, that they had no temptation to disguise or falsify the great facts recorded in the Gospels, in order to serve any worldly interest, or to humour and confirm any darling prejudices. On the contrary, it appeareth, that they were themselves brought, by the irresistible evidence of the facts they relate, to embrace a religion, which was not only contrary to their worldly interests, and exposed them to all manner of reproaches, persecutions, and sufferings,

ings, but which was also contrary to their former most favourite notions, and rooted prejudices. For what could be more contrary to the notions and prejudices, which then universally possessed the minds of the Jews, both of the learned and of the vulgar, than the doctrine of a crucified Messiah, who was to erect a kingdom, not of this world, but of a spiritual nature, in the benefits and privileges of which the Gentiles were to be joint sharers with the Jews? And, finally, they gave the highest proof of their being themselves persuaded of the truth of those facts, by their persisting in their testimony with an unshaken constancy, in opposition to all the powers and terrors of this world. To this it may be added, that the writings themselves have all the characters of genuine purity, simplicity, and uncorrupted integrity, that any writings can have; nor is there any thing in them that gives the least ground of suspicion of their having been written in any later age, or that favours of the spirit of this world, of ambition, avarice, or sensuality. And these writings have been transmitted to us with an unquestionable evidence, greater than can be produced for any other writings in the world. We can clearly trace them through all the intermediate ages up to that immediately succeeding the Apostles, and have the most convincing proof of their having been still extant, and still received and acknowledged among Christians. There are great numbers of books, now in our hands, that were written and published in the several ages between that

that time and this, in which there are continual references to the Gospels, and other sacred books of the New Testament. And by the numerous quotations from them, and large portions transcribed out of them in every age, it is incontestably manifest, that the accounts of the facts, discourses, doctrines, &c. which now appear in them, are the same that were to be found in them in the first ages. Innumerable copies of them were soon spread abroad in different nations: they have been translated into various languages: many commentaries have been written upon them by different authors, who have inserted the sacred text in their writings: they have been constantly applied to on many occasions, by persons of different sects, parties, inclinations, and interests. These are things which no man can be so hardy as to deny. And by this kind of evidence, the greatest and the most convincing which the nature of the thing can possibly admit of, we are assured, that the evangelical records, which are now in our hands, have been transmitted safe to us, and are the same that were originally published in the apostolical age; and that a general corruption of them, or a substitution of other accounts instead of them, if any had attempted it, would have been an impossible thing.

Taking all these considerations together, it appeareth, that never were there any accounts of facts that better deserved to be depended on. And what mightily confirmeth the credit of those writings, and of the facts there related, is, that

it cannot be contested, that great numbers, both of Jews and heathens, upon the credit of those facts, forsaking the religion of their ancestors, were brought to receive the religion of Jesus in the first age, when they had the best opportunity of inquiring into the truth and certainty of those facts: and this in opposition to their most inveterate prejudices, and when, by embracing it, they exposed themselves to all manner of evils and sufferings. The spreading of the Christian religion, as the case was circumstanced, furnisheth a very strong proof of the truth of the facts on which it was founded, and cannot otherwise be accounted for.

Our author asserts, — that, “ if the facts can be proved, the Christian religion will prevail, without the assistance of profound reasoning: but, if the facts cannot be proved, the authority of it will sink in the world, even with this assistance *.” — I think it may be fairly argued from this, that if the extraordinary facts had not been true, on the evidence of which alone Christianity is founded, it must have sunk at the very beginning, and could never have been established in the world at all; considering the nature of this religion, and the difficulties and oppositions it had to encounter with. It was manifestly contrary to the prevailing prejudices both of Jews and Gentiles: it tended intirely to subvert the whole system of the pagan superstition and idolatry, which was wrought into their civil constitution, and upon which the

* Vol. I. p. 175.

prosperity of the *Roman* empire, and the establishment of their state, were thought to depend. It also tended to set aside the peculiar polity of the Jews, upon which they so highly valued themselves, and to subvert all the pleasing hopes and expectations of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, with which they were so infinitely delighted. It obliged men to receive one that had been ignominiously condemned and crucified, as their Redeemer and their Lord, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world. It proposed no temporal advantages to its votaries, to bribe men to embrace it; gave no indulgence to their corrupt lusts, nor had any thing in it to soothe and gratify their vicious appetites and inclinations. At the same time it had all the powers of the world engaged against it: yet it soon triumphed over all opposition, tho' propagated by the seemingly meanest instruments; and made an astonishing progress through a great part of the *Roman* empire, then the most knowing and civilized part of the earth. This is a strong additional confirmation of the truth of those accounts which are contained in the Gospel records; since there could not be, as the case was circumstanced, any possible inducement to Jews or Gentiles to embrace Christianity, but a thorough conviction of its divine original, and of the truth of those extraordinary facts by which it was attested.

And if the first propagators of this religion had offer'd no other proof but their own words in support of it, and in confirmation of the divine

vine

vine authority of a crucified Jesus, it cannot, with any consistency, be supposed, that a scheme of religion, so destitute of all worldly advantages, and so opposite to mens prejudices, as well as vices, and which subjected those that made profession of it to such bitter reproaches and persecutions, could possibly have prevail'd in the world.

If, at the time when Christianity made its first appearance in the world, it had been embraced by the *Roman* emperor, as it afterwards was by *Constantine the Great*, if it had been countenanced by the higher powers, there might have been some pretence for ascribing the progress it made to the encouragement it met with from the great and powerful. The author of these Letters, speaking of the miracles said to be wrought at the tomb of the *Abbé Paris*, observes, —

“ That, if the first minister had been a Jansenist,
 “ all *France* had kept his festival, and those
 “ silly impostures would have been transmitted,
 “ in all the solemn pomp of history, from the
 “ knaves of this age to the fools of the next †.” —

But this very instance, in which the Deists have triumphed so much, may be turned against them, since it affordeth a plain proof, how difficult it is to maintain the credit of miraculous facts, when they are discountenanced by the civil power. The miracles supposed to be wrought at the tomb of the *Abbé Paris* were soon quash'd, and a full stop put to the course of the miraculous operations, notwithstanding there was a nu-

† Vol. I. p. 125, 126.

merous, a powerful, and artful body of men engaged in reputation and interest to support the credit of them. It may therefore be justly concluded, that if the extraordinary facts, on which Christianity was founded, had been false, the credit of them must soon have sunk, and that religion with it, when all the reigning powers of the world, Jewish and Heathen, joined their force and influence to suppress it*.

In what hath been said above, to shew the credit that is due to the accounts given of the facts by which Christianity is established, it is supposed, that these accounts were written by Christ's own disciples, or their most intimate companions, and in the first age, the age in which the facts were done, *i. e.* by persons perfectly well acquainted with those facts. But this is what our author seems unwilling to allow. In his fifth Letter, after having observ'd, that — “false history has been employed to propagate Christianity formerly, and that the same abuse of history is still continued” — he instances in Mr. *Abbadie's* saying, that — “the Gospel of St. *Matthew* is cited by *Clemens* bishop of *Rome*, a disciple of the Apostles; that *Bar-nabas* cites it in his Epistle; that *Ignatius* and *Polycarp* receive it; and that the same fathers give testimony for St. *Mark*” — He adds, that — “the bishop of *London*, in his third Pastoral Letter, speaks to the same effect.” — And

* The difficulties Christianity had to encounter with, are elegantly represented by Mr. *West*, in his admirable treatise on the Resurrection.

then he proceeds — “ I presume the fact advanced by the minister, and the bishop, is a mistake. If the fathers of the first century do mention some passages that are agreeable to what we read in our Evangelists, will it follow, that these fathers had the same Gospels before them? To say so, is a manifest abuse of history, and quite inexcusable in writers that knew, or might have known, that these fathers made use of other Gospels, wherein such passages might be contained, or they might be preserved in unwritten tradition. Besides which, I would almost venture to affirm, that the fathers of the first century do not expressly name the Gospels we have of *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John* *.” — His design is plainly to signify, that there is no proof, that the Gospels, the books of the Evangelists which we now have in our hands, were written in the first age of Christianity.

As this is a matter of importance, I shall offer some observations upon it.

And, first, It is to be observed, that though but few of the writings of the fathers of the first century are come down to us, and those generally very short; yet it cannot be denied, that in all these writings the facts recorded in the Gospels, especially relating to our Lord's passion and resurrection, and the scheme of religion there taught, are all along supposed, and refer'd to, as of undoubted truth and certainty, and of divine original: so that those writings of the apo-

* Vol. I. p. 177, 178.

stolical fathers bear testimony materially to the Gospels, and to the facts there related, and come in aid of those accounts. It is also manifest, that there are several particular passages quoted in these writings, which seem plainly to refer to passages that are now found in the Evangelists; and these passages are mention'd in a manner which shews, that they regarded them as of divine authority. Nor is it a valid objection against this, that they do not cite the Gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*, by name: for it is not their custom, in mentioning passages of Scripture, to name the particular books out of which these passages are extracted; they content themselves with producing the passages, or giving the sense of them. Thus they generally do with regard to testimonies produced from the sacred books of the Old Testament: and yet no one will deny, that they had those books in their hands, and acknowledged their divine authority.

Barnabas, in his Epistle, has some plain references to passages that are to be found in *St. Matthew's Gospel*. And, with regard to one of them, he introduceth it with saying, *It is written*; which was a form of quotation usual among the Jews in citing their Sacred Books; and seems plainly to shew, that he referred to written accounts of the actions and discourses of our Saviour.

Clement, in his Epistle, mentions several remarkable passages in our Lord's discourses, recorded by the Evangelists, *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*; he calls them, *the words of the Lord Jesus, which he spake*; and represents them as

of the highest authority, and deserving the greatest regard.

Ignatius hath several passages, which either are plain references, or manifest allusions, to passages that are to be found in *St. Matthew's Gospel*, and to several other books of the New Testament. He tells those to whom he writes, that they—"ought to hearken to the Prophets, " but especially to the Gospel, in which the pas- " sion has been manifested to us, and the resur- " rection perfected §."—Where, as by *the Prophets* are undoubtedly to be understood the prophetic writings, so by *the Gospel* seem plainly to be understood the writings of the Evangelists, collected into one book called the Gospel. And in other passages he speaks to the same purpose ||, and in a manner which shews, that this book of the Gospel was of the most sacred authority among Christians.

Polycarp, in his Epistle, though very short, hath many passages that plainly refer or allude to texts of the New Testament. And, quoting some passages which are expressly found in the Evangelists, he introduces them thus, *The Lord hath said*. He expresses his confidence, that the *Philippians*, to whom he writes, were *well exercised in the Holy Scriptures*. And it is manifest from what he there adds, that by the Holy Scriptures he particularly intends the sacred writings of the New Testament: which shews, that they were had in the greatest veneration by the Christians of that age.

§ Ep. ad Smyrn. S. 7. || Ep. ad Philadelph. S. 5, and 9.
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He that would see a more distinct account of these things, my consult the learned Dr. *Lardner's* accurate collection of passages from the apostolical fathers, in his *Credibility of the Gospel-history*, Part II. Vol. I.

It appeareth from this brief account, that the apostolical fathers have taken as much notice of the evangelical writings, as could be reasonably expected, or as they had occasion to do. And therefore I see not why Mr. *Abbadie* should be charged with an abuse of history, for representing the fathers of the first century, as having cited the books of the Evangelists; since though they do not expressly quote them by name, yet they quote passages as of sacred authority, which are to be found in these books: and therefore it may be reasonably supposed, that they refer to those books, which, as I shall presently shew, were then extant, and the authority of which was then acknowledged.

But it is urged, that if the fathers of the first century do mention some passages that are agreeable to what we read in our Evangelists, it does not follow, that they had the same Gospels before them; because—“those fathers made use of other Gospels, wherein such passages might be contained, or they might be preserved in unwritten tradition.”—But this way of stating the case does not afford the least presumption, that the books of our Evangelists were not then extant. It is only supposed, that there might be other accounts in that age, in which the same things might be contained; and that the

actions and discourses of our Lord were well known among the Christians of the first age, both by written accounts, and by tradition received from the preaching of the Apostles. And this certainly confirmeth, instead of invalidating, the accounts given in the Gospels; and supposeth the facts there recorded to have been of well-known credit and authority. But he ought not to mention it as a thing that is and must be acknowledged by all the learned, that those fathers of the first century made use of other Gospels besides those of the Evangelists. It cannot be proved, that they ever refer to any other Gospels. The only passage in all the apostolical fathers, which seems to look that way, is one in *Ignatius*, which some suppose was taken out of the Gospel of the *Hebrews*, which itself was really *St. Matthew's* Gospel, with some interpolations and additions; and yet that passage may be fairly interpreted, as referring to the words of our Saviour, recorded by *St. Luke*, Ch. xxiv. 39*.

It may be gathered indeed from the introduction to *St. Luke's* Gospel, that many, in that first age, had undertaken to write an account of the history of our Saviour's life, miracles, discourses, &c. but it does not appear, that those writings were generally received among Christians as authentic; probably because they were not done with sufficient exactness, and had a mixture of things false or uncertain. And therefore it is not likely, that the passages, referred to by the

* See *Lardner's Credibility, &c.* Part II. Vol. I. p. 184, 185, 186.

fathers of the first century, were taken from those writings: it is far more probable, that they were taken from the books of the Evangelists, where we still find them, and which were then extant, and their authority acknowledged among Christians.

That the Gospels which we have now in our hands were undoubtedly extant in the apostolical age, and regarded as authentic, admitteth of a clear proof, if it be considered, that in the age immediately succeeding we find them universally received and acknowledged in the Christian church. There are several books come down to our times, which were written by authors who unquestionably lived in the second century, in which these Gospels are frequently, and by name, referred to as of divine authority; and many express quotations drawn from them, by which it is manifest, that they were then received with great veneration in the Christian churches. And it appeareth, from the first Apology of *Justin Martyr*, published about an hundred years after the death of our Saviour, that it was then the ordinary practice to read the *memoirs of the Apostles*, and the *writings of the Prophets*, in the religious assemblies of Christians. And that, by the *memoirs of the Apostles*, he means the books of the Evangelists, is evident from several passages in his writings; and particularly from a passage in this very Apology, where, having mentioned the *memoirs composed by the Apostles*, he adds, *which are called Gospels*: and there are frequent citations from all of them in his writings; which plainly shew, that he

looked upon those books as authentic histories of Jesus Christ. The same may be observed concerning other writers in that century. And since it is manifest, that the four Gospels were generally received, and had in the highest esteem and veneration, among Christians in the second century, even in the former part of it (for that Apology was written about the year 139. or 140.) ; this plainly sheweth, that the Gospel must have been written and published in the apostolical age itself. And it was, because they were known to have been written by the Apostles, or their companions and intimates ; and that the accounts there given were authentic, and absolutely to be depended upon ; that these writings were so early and generally received. *Eusebius*, speaking of *Quadratus*, and other eminent persons, who — “ held the first rank in the succession of the “ Apostles,” — informs us, — “ that they, travel-
 “ ling abroad, performed the work of Evangelists,
 “ being ambitious to preach Christ, and deliver
 “ the Scripture of the divine Gospels *.” — The persons he speaketh of flourished in the reign of *Trajan*, in the beginning of the second century, and had undoubtedly lived a good part of their time in the first ; and their carrying the books of the Gospels with them where they preached, and delivering them to their converts, sheweth, that those Gospels were then well known to be genuine, and had in great esteem. And indeed if they had not been written in the apostolical age, and then known to be genuine, it

• *Euseb. Eccles. hist. lib. iii. cap. 37:*

cannot be conceived, that so soon after, even in the next age, they could have been so generally dispersed, and stately read in the Christian assemblies, and regarded as of equal authority with the writings of the antient prophets, which had been for some ages read in the synagogues on the Sabbath-days. And though a great clamour hath been raised concerning some spurious Gospels, which appeared in the primitive times, there is nothing capable of a clearer proof, than that the four Gospels, and those only, were generally received as of divine authority in the Christian church, in the ages nearest the Apostles; and have continued so ever since, and have been all along regarded with the profoundest veneration.

To this it ought to be added, that the heathen writers, who lived nearest those times, never pretended to deny, that the books of the Evangelists received among Christians were written by Christ's own disciples. *Celsus* lived in the second century. He speaks of Jesus the author of the Christian religion, as having lived *πρὸ πάντων ὀλίγων ἐτῶν*, a very few years before. He mentions many things recorded in our Evangelists, relating to the birth, life, miracles, sufferings, and resurrection, of Jesus Christ; and tells the Christians—“ These things we have produced out of your own writings.”— He all along supposeth them to have been written by Christ's own disciples, that lived and conversed with him, though he does all he can

to ridicule and expose them*. To this it may be added, that the emperor *Julian*, who flourished about the middle of the fourth century, and who was both of great acuteness, and very well disposed to take all advantages against Christianity, and had, no doubt, an opportunity of reading whatsoever books had been written against the Christians before his time, never pretends to contest the Gospels being written by Christ's own disciples, and those whose names they bear, *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*; whom he expressly mentions as the writers of those books †; though, no doubt, he would have been very well pleased, if he could have met with any proof or presumption that could make it probable, that the books of the Evangelists, so generally received among Christians, were written, not by Christ's own immediate disciples, or their companions, or in the apostolical age, but were compiled afterwards, and falsely ascribed to the Apostles. To which it may be added, that none of the *Jews*, in any of their writings against Christianity, though they often mention the books of the Evangelists, have ever pretended, that those books were not written by those to whom they are attributed; but by others, in after-times, under their names: nor do they ever mention any charge or suspicion of this kind, as having been brought against those books by their ancestors.

* *Orig. contra Cels. lib. ii. p. 67, 69, 70.* † *Cyri. Alex. contra Julian. lib. x. p. 327. Edit. Spanheim.*

Thus we find, by the acknowledgement of friends and enemies, who lived nearest to those times, that the accounts contained in the books of the Evangelists were written in the apostolical age; the age in which those facts are said to have been done, which are there recorded. There are plain references to them, and passages produced out of them, in the few writings that remain of the first century. And in the age immediately succeeding, we have full proof, that they were universally received in the Christian church, as of divine authority; and read as such in the Christian assemblies; and were ascribed to Christ's own immediate attendants, or their intimate companions, *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*, by name. This hath been universally admitted ever since in all ages: and these books have been transmitted down to our times with such an uninterrupted and continued evidence, as cannot be produced for any other books whatsoever. He would be accounted a very unreasonable man, that should deny, or even question it, whether the books of *Livy, Sallust, Tacitus*, were written by those whose names they bear. But the Deists, and his lordship, among the rest, most unreasonably reject that historical testimony and evidence in behalf of the Scriptures, which they would account to be sufficient with regard to any other books in the world.

It gives a mighty force to all this, that, upon a careful examining and considering the books themselves, they bear the plain marks and characters

raeters of the first, the apostolical age; and not one mark of a later date. Though three of the Evangelists make particular mention of our Saviour's predictions concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the temple; yet there is not any intimation given in any one book of the New Testament, of that destruction as having been actually accomplished, which yet was in forty years after our Lord's crucifixion. And it could scarce have been avoided, but that some or other of them must have taken notice of it, considering the many occasions there were for mentioning it, if these books had been generally written after that event. It appeareth, from the beginning of *St. Luke's Gospel*, compared with the introduction to the *Acts of the Apostles*, that he wrote his Gospel before he wrote the *Acts*. And yet this latter was evidently written in the apostolical age, and some time before the death of *St. Paul*. For it is plain, from the accounts given in that book, that the writer of it was a companion of *St. Paul* in his labours and travels, and particularly was with him in his voyage to *Rome*; with an account of which, and of his preaching there two years in his own hired house, the book ends. It taketh no notice of his after-labours and travels, and of his martyrdom at *Rome*; which it would undoubtedly have done, as well as of the martyrdom of *St. James*, if it had been written after those events happened. And it is a great proof of the high veneration the first Christians had for those writings, and how careful they were not to insert any

any accounts into them, which were not originally there, that none of them ever pretended to make supplemental additions to that book, either with regard to St. *Paul* himself, or any other of the Apostles. And as we may justly conclude, that St. *Luke's* Gospel was published in the apostolical age itself, whilst many of the Apostles were yet living; so it hath been generally agreed, that St. *Matthew's* Gospel was published before that of St. *Luke*; and that the Gospel of St. *John* was written last of all. And yet this last, as is manifest from the book itself, was written by one of Christ's own disciples, *the disciple whom Jesus loved*. And it appeareth to have been principally designed to record several things, which were not distinctly taken notice of by the other evangelical writers. Accordingly we find, that though the facts are there plainly supposed, which are related by the other Evangelists; yet those miracles and discourses of our Lord are chiefly insisted upon, which either were omitted by them, or but slightly mentioned. Indeed whosoever impartially considereth the writings of the New Testament, will easily observe in them many peculiar characters, which plainly point to the time in which they were written. And there is all the reason in the world to think, that if these books had been written in any succeeding age, they would have been in several respects different from what they now are. The Christian religion here appeareth in its primitive simplicity, without any of the mixtures of following ages. The idea that is given of the
Christian

Christian church, in the writings of the New Testament, is such as is proper to the first age; and in which there were some variations, even from that which immediately followed. The discourses of our blessed Lord, as recorded by the Evangelists, are of such a nature, so full of divine wisdom, and admirable sentiments, as would manifestly appear, if there were room in this place to enter on a particular consideration of them. They are delivered with so much gravity and authority, and yet, for the most part, in such a particular way, that they carry the evident proofs of their own genuineness. The character given of our Saviour, in the books of the Evangelists, seems plainly to have been drawn from the life. And it may be justly affirmed, that it was not in the power of such writers, destitute, as they appear to be, of all art and ornament, to have feigned such a character: a character, in which is wonderfully united a divine dignity becoming the Son of God, and an amiable humility and condescension becoming the Saviour of men; an admirable wisdom in conjunction with the greatest candor and simplicity of heart; an ardent zeal for the glory of God, and the most extensive charity and benevolence towards mankind; an impartial freedom and severity in reproofing faults, and great tenderness in bearing with mens weaknesses and infirmities; an unparalleled purity and sanctity of manners, without any thing sour or unsociable, or a supercilious contempt of others; the most exemplary patience and fortitude under
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Lord Bolingbroke's Letters. III

the greatest sufferings, joined with a remarkable tenderness and sensibility of spirit. To this may be added the beauty of his maxims, the solidity of his reflections, the just and sublime notions of religion, which he every-where inculcath, far superior to any thing that was taught by the most celebrated doctors of the *Jewish* nation. The morals he is represented as having taught are the most pure and refined, and yet without running into any superstitious extremes, such as were the affected strictnesses of the *Pharisees* and *Essenes*, or the false refinements of some Christians in the following ages. The motives there proposed are the most powerful and efficacious that can be presented to the human mind, drawn from all the charms of the divine love and goodness; from the engaging offers of grace and mercy made to the truly penitent, which yet are so ordered as not to give the least encouragement to the obstinately wicked and disobedient; from the promises of divine aids to assist our sincere endeavours in the performance of our duty; from the important solemnities of the future judgment, and the eternal retributions of the world to come, the inexpressible glory and felicity prepared for good men, and the dreadful punishments that shall be inflicted upon the wicked. In a word, so perfect is the idea of religion contained in those writings, that all attempts to add to it in succeeding ages, or raise it to an higher degree of perfection, have really fallen short of its original excellence, and tended to tarnish its primitive beauty and glory.

Taking

Taking all these considerations together, they form a very strong and convincing proof of the truth and authenticity of the Gospel-records; and that, whether we consider the method of conveyance, whereby they have been transmitted to us, and which we can trace up with a continued evidence to the first age, or the internal characters of original truth and purity, and genuine integrity, which appear in the writings themselves.

To take off the force of the evidence, brought for the facts on which Christianity is established, it hath been urged, that these facts are only attested by Christians. The author of these Letters observes, that the church has the advantage over her adversaries; that the books that were written against her have been destroyed, whilst whatever tends to justify her has been preserved in her annals— And that— “ he must be very
 “ implicit indeed, who receives for true the hi-
 “ story of any nation or religion, and much more
 “ that of any sect or party, without having the
 “ means of confirming it with some other hi-
 “ story *.” He here seems to suppose it as a thing certain, that there had been historical evidence against Christianity; but that the church had suppressed it. But this is a precarious supposition, without any thing to support it. The account of the facts on which Christianity is founded, were published, as hath been shewn, by persons who pretended to be perfectly well acquainted with those facts, and in the age in

which they were done, and who speak of them as things publicly known, and of undoubted certainty. The proper way therefore for the enemies of Christianity to have taken, would have been, to have published, if they were able, contrary authentic accounts, in that very age, for disproving those facts; which it would have been easy to have done, if they had been false: for, in that case, thousands must have known them to be so; since many of the facts are represented as having been done in public view, and in the presence of great multitudes. But that no such contrary historical evidence was then produced or published, we may confidently affirm; not only because there is no account of any such evidence, but because, if the facts on which Christianity is established, had been authentically disproved even in the age in which they were said to have been done; and if there had been good historical evidence produced on the other side, by which it appeared, that those facts were false; the Christian religion, considering the other disadvantages that attended it, and that it was principally supported by those facts, must have sunk at once. How is it conceivable, that in that case it would have flourished more and more; and that vast numbers, and many of them persons of considerable sense and learning, would have continued to embrace it; in the face of the greatest difficulties and discouragements? How comes it; that none of the *Apologies for Christianity* that were published very early, and presented to the *Roman Emperors*, some of which are still extant,

take any notice of such contrary historical evidence, or endeavour to confute it, but still speak of those facts as incontestably true and certain? The first heathen author that appears to have written a formal book against the Christian religion, is *Celsus*. And what he advanced to this purpose we learn from his own words, preserved by *Origen*, in his excellent answer to him. He endeavoureth, as far as he can, to turn the Gospel-accounts to ridicule; but he never referreth to any authentic history, or book of credit and authority, which had been published, to shew that the facts, recorded by the Evangelists, and believed by the Christians, were false. He pretendeth indeed, that——“ he could tell many
 “ other things, relating to Jesus, truer than those
 “ things that were written of him by his own
 “ disciples; but that he willingly passed them
 “ by*.”—— And we may be sure, that if he had been able to produce any contrary historical evidence, which he thought was of weight sufficient to invalidate the evangelical records, a man of his virulence and acuteness would not have failed to produce it; and his not having done so, plainly sheweth, that he knew of none such; though, if there had been any such, he must have known it. Nor do I find, that *Julian*, when he wrote against Christianity, pretended to produce any contrary historical evidence for disproving the facts recorded in the Gospels: if he had, something of it would have appeared in *Cyril's* answer, in which there are many frag-

* *Orig. contra Cels. lib. ii. p. 67: Edit. Spencer.*

ments of his book preserved. I think therefore the pretence of there having been contrary evidence to disprove the facts recorded in the Gospel, which evidence was afterwards suppressed by the Christians, is absolutely vain and groundless. And to refuse our assent to the Gospel-history, for want of having an opportunity to confront it with contrary historical evidence, when we have no reason to think there ever was such evidence, would be the most unreasonable conduct in the world.

But still it is urged, that the accounts of those facts, in order to their obtaining full credit from any impartial person, ought to be confirmed by the testimony of those who were not themselves Christians; since Christians may be excepted against as prejudiced persons; and that, if there be no such testimony, it administers just ground of suspicion. As a great stress has been frequently laid upon this, I shall consider it distinctly.

To expect, that professed enemies, who reviled and persecuted the Christians, should acknowledge the truth of the main facts on which Christianity is founded, is an absurdity and contradiction. And if any testimonies to this purpose were now to be found in their writings, it would undoubtedly be alleged by those gentlemen, who now complain of the want of such testimonies, that those passages were foisted in by Christians, and ought to be rejected as supposititious. But yet we have the testimony of adversaries concerning many facts relating to Christianity,

Christianity, as far as can be expected from adversaries. It cannot be expected, that *Jews* or *Heathens*, continuing such, should acknowledge Christ's divine mission; that he was the Son of God, the Saviour of the world: but none of them ever pretended to deny, that there was such a person as *Jesus Christ*, who was the author of the Christian religion, and appeared in *Judea* in the reign of *Tiberius*. *Tacitus's* testimony, as well as that of *Celsus*, is very express to this purpose*. And some of the heathens went so far as to speak very honourably of him. So did the Emperor *Alexander Severus*, who would have built a temple to him, if some of the pagans about him had not made strong remonstrances against it, as *Lampridius* informs us in his life †. And even *Porphyry* himself, whose words *Eusebius* hath preserved, speaks of him as a pious man, whose soul was taken into heaven ‡. It would be unreasonable to expect, that the enemies of Christianity should acknowledge the accounts given of Christ by the Evangelists to be true and authentic, and absolutely to be depended upon; for then they must have turned Christians. But yet they never denied, what some of our modern unbelievers seem unwilling to acknowledge, that Christ's own disciples, who had lived and conversed with him, had written accounts of his life, and actions, and discourses, which were received by Christians as

* *Tacit. Annal. lib. xv. Hist. August. tom. I. Edit. Var. lib. iii. p. 134.*

† *Cap. xxix. xliii. Hist. August. Demonstrat. Evangel. lib. iii. p. 134.*

true and authentic. The testimony of *Celsus*, as was observed before, is very full to this purpose. It cannot be expected, that *Jews* and heathens should acknowledge Christ's miracles to have been really wrought by a divine power. But they do not deny, that he did, or seemed to do, wonderful works. And the way they take to account for them amounteth to an acknowledgement of the facts. Some ascribed them to magical arts, as *Celsus*, who saith, that on the account of the strange things he performed, *Jesus* claimed to be regarded as a God*. Others, as *Hierocles*, opposed to them the wonders pretended to have been wrought by *Apollonius Tyaneus*. The *Jews* ascribed the works he performed to the virtue of the ineffable Name, which he stole out of the temple. And the Emperor *Julian* expressly acknowledgeth some of his miraculous works, particularly his healing the lame and the blind, and casting out devils, at the same time that he affects to speak of them in a very slight and diminishing manner †. As to Christ's having suffered under *Pontius Pilate*, the heathens and *Jews* were so far from denying it, that they endeavoured to turn it to the reproach of Christians, that they believed in, and worshiped, one that had been crucified. It cannot be expected indeed, that they should own, that he really rose again from the dead on the third day, as he himself had foretold; but they acknowledge, that his disciples declared, that he did so, and professed to

* *Orig. contra Cels. lib. i. p. 7. 22, 30.* † See his words in *Cyril contra Julian. lib. vi. p. 121. Edit. Spanheim.*

have seen him, and conversed with him, after his resurrection. This appeareth from the testimony of *Celsus*, at the same time that he endeavours to ridicule the account given, by the Evangelists, of Christ's Resurrection *. The *Jeros*, by pretending that the disciples stole away the body of Jesus, whilst the soldiers that were appointed to guard it slept, plainly acknowledged, that the body did not remain in the sepulchre where it had been laid after his crucifixion; and that therefore he might have risen from the dead, for any thing they could prove to the contrary. The early and remarkable diffusion of Christianity, notwithstanding all the difficulties it had to encounter with, and the persecutions to which the professors of it were exposed, is a very important fact, and which, as the case was circumstanced, tends very much to confirm the truth of the Gospel-accounts. And this is very fully attested by heathen writers, though it cannot be expected, that they would ascribe this propagation of Christianity to its proper causes, the force of truth, and a divine power accompanying it.

Tacitus, in a passage where he expresseth himself in a manner that shews he was strongly prejudiced against Christianity, informs us, that there was a *great multitude* of Christians at *Rome* in *Nero's* time, which was in less than forty years after the death of our Saviour; and gives an account of the terrible torments and sufferings to

* *Orig. contra Cels. lib. ii. p. 94. 96, 97. lib. vii. p. 355.*
which

which they were exposed *. *Julian*, speaking of the Evangelist *John*, whom he represents as one of Christ's own disciples, saith, that in his time a great multitude, in most of the cities of *Greece* and *Italy*, were seized with that disease; for so he calls Christianity; and that *John*, observing this, was encouraged to assert, that Christ was God, which none of the other Apostles had done †. And we learn from the younger *Pliny*, that in the reign of *Trajan*, i. e. about seventy years after our Lord's crucifixion, the Christian faith had made such a progress in several parts of the *Roman* empire, that the temples of the gods were almost desolate; their solemn sacred rites long neglected; and that there were very few that would buy the sacrifices ‡. It cannot be expected, that heathens, continuing such, should acknowledge, that the Christians were right in their notions of religion; but the last-mentioned celebrated heathen gives a noble testimony to the innocency of their lives and manners, and that they bound themselves by the most sacred engagements to the practice of righteousness and virtue, and not to allow themselves in vice and wickedness, falsehood and impurity. Even *Celsus*, than whom Christianity never had a bitterer enemy, owns, that there were among Christians many temperate, modest, and understanding persons ||: and *Julian* recommends to his heathen pontiff *Arsacius* the example of the Christians, for

* Tacit. Annal. lib. xv. † See the passage in Cyril, lib. x. p. 327. ‡ Plin. lib. x. Ep. 97. ad Trajan. || Orig. contra Cels. lib. i. p. 22.

their kindness and humanity to strangers; and not only to those of their own religion, but to the heathens; and for their appearing sanctity of life; and this he supposes to be the chief cause why Christianity had made such a progress*. If none but Christian writers had celebrated the constancy of the antient martyrs, some would have been ready to have suspected, that they feigned this to do them honour, or, at least, greatly heightened it: but it appeareth from the undoubted testimonies of the above-mentioned *Pliny*, of *Arrian*, who flourished under the reign of *Hadrian*, and of the emperor *Marcus Antoninus*, that the antient Christians were very remarkable for their fortitude, and contempt of torments and death, and for their inflexible firmness and constancy to their religion under the greatest sufferings †.

Though therefore it were absurd to expect, that the enemies of Christianity, continuing such, should directly attest the truth and certainty of the main facts on which the Christian religion is founded; yet we have several testimonies from them, that contribute not a little to the confirmation of those facts. Besides which, what ought to have great weight with us, we have the testimony of persons who were once *Jews* or heathens, and strongly prejudiced against the Christian system, who yet, upon the convincing evidence they had of those facts, were themselves

* *Julian*, ep. xlix. ad Arfac. † *Plin.* ubi supra. *Arrian. Epiet.* lib. iv. cap. 7. *Marcus Anton.* lib. xi. 3.

brought over to the religion of Jesus*. Of such persons there were great numbers even in the first age, the age in which the facts were done, and in which they had the best opportunity of inquiring into the truth and certainty of them. But there could not be a more remarkable instance of this kind than the Apostle *Paul*. Never was there any man more strongly prejudiced against Christianity than he: which had carried him so far, that he was very active in persecuting the professors of it, and thought that in doing so he had done God good service. He was at the same time a person of great parts and acuteness, and who had a learned education; yet he was brought over to the Christian faith by a divine power and evidence; which he was not able to resist; and thenceforth did more than any other of the Apostles to propagate the religion of Jesus; though thereby he not only forfeited all his hopes of worldly interest and advancement, but exposed himself to a succession of the most grievous reproaches, persecutions, and sufferings; all which he bore with an invincible constancy, and even with a divine exultation and joy. In his admirable Epistles, which were undeniably written in the first age of Christianity, and than which no writings can bear more uncontested marks of genuine purity and integrity, there are continual references to the principal facts recorded in the Gospels, as of undoubted truth and certainty. And it manifestly appear-

* See *Addison's* treatise of the Christian religion, Sect. iii. iv.

eth, that great miracles were then wrought in the name of Jesus; and that extraordinary gifts were poured forth upon the disciples. And why should not his testimony in favour of Christianity be of the greatest force? Must it be disregarded, because of his turning Christian; *i. e.* because he was so convinced of those facts by the strongest evidence, that it over-ruled all his prejudices, and brought him over to Christianity, in opposition to all his former notions, inclinations, and interests? Whereas it is this very thing that giveth his testimony a peculiar force *. And if he had not turned Christian, his testimony in favour of Christianity, if he had given any, would not have had so great weight, as being insufficient for his own conviction; or it would have been rejected as a forgery, under pretence that he could not say and believe such things without embracing the Christian faith.

This very pretence has been made use of to set aside the remarkable testimony of *Josephus*. And indeed, if that testimony be genuine (and a great deal has been strongly urged to prove it so, at least for the substance of it), it must be acknowledged, that he was far from being an enemy to Christianity, though he was perhaps too much a courtier openly to profess it.

There is another argument, which the ingenious author of these Letters proposeth, and upon which he layeth no small stress, as if it were a demonstration against the divine authority

* See this clearly and solidly argued in *Sir George Lyttelton's Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul.*

of the Christian religion. He observes, that—
“ The writers of the *Romish* religion have at-
“ tempted to shew, that the text of the holy
“ writ is on many accounts insufficient to be the
“ sole criterion of orthodoxy; and he appre-
“ hends they have shewn it: and the writers
“ of the reformed religion have erected their
“ batteries against tradition: and that they
“ have jointly laid their axes to the root of
“ Christianity: that men will be apt to reason
“ upon what they have advanced, that there
“ remains at this time no standard at all of Chri-
“ stianity: and that, by consequence, either this
“ religion was not originally of divine institution,
“ or else God has not provided effectually for
“ preserving the genuine purity of it; and the
“ gates of hell have actually prevailed, in con-
“ tradiction to his promise, against the church.
“ He must be worse than an Atheist that affirms
“ the last: and therefore the best effect of this
“ reasoning that can be hoped for is, that men
“ should fall into Theism, and subscribe to the
“ first;”—*viz.* that the Christian religion was
not originally of divine institution *. He seems
to think this dilemma unanswerable; and, in
order to this, he pronounceth on the side of the
Romish church, that their writers have shewn,
that the sacred text is—“ insufficient to be the
“ sole criterion of orthodoxy;”—or, as he
afterwards expresseth it, that—“ it hath not that
“ authenticity, clearness, and precision, which
“ are necessary to establish it as a divine and a

* Vol. I. p. 179, 180, 184

“certain rule of faith and practice.”—Why his lordship giveth the preference to the *Romish* divines in this controversy, is very evident. It is because it best answereth the design he hath in view; which manifestly is, to subvert the credit and authority of the Christian religion, and leave it nothing to depend upon but the *force of education*, and *the civil and ecclesiastical power*.

It cannot be denied, that some writers of the *Romish* church, whilst they have endeavoured to shew, that the Scripture is insufficient to be a complete rule of faith and practice, have said as much to expose the sacred text, as if they were in league with the infidels against it, though they, as well as we, profess to own its divine original. The enemies of Christianity have not failed to take advantage of this. And indeed there cannot be a greater absurdity than to suppose, that God should inspire men to reveal his will to mankind, and to instruct them in the way of salvation, and order it so, that they should commit that revelation to writing, for the use and benefit of his church; and yet that it should be insufficient to answer the end, or to guide those that in the sincerity of their hearts, and with the attention which becometh them in an affair of such infinite importance, apply themselves to the understanding and practising of it.

What his lordship here offers, and it contains the sum of what has been advanced by the *Romish* writers on this subject, is this — “I am sure, that experience, from the first promulgation of Christianity to this hour, shews
“ abundantly

“ abundantly with how much ease and success;
“ the most opposite, the most extravagant, nay;
“ the most impious opinions, and the most con-
“ tradictory faiths, may be founded on the same
“ text, and plausibly defended by the same au-
“ thority*.”—This way of arguing beareth a near
affinity to that which lieth at the foundation of all
scepticism; *viz.* that there is no certain criterion
of truth, or right reason, because reason is pre-
tended for the most contradictory opinions; and
that it is impossible to be certain of any thing,
because of the differences among mankind about
every thing: that there are no certain principles
at all even in natural religion or morality; since
there are none, not even those relating to the
existence and perfections of God, a Providence,
a future state, the natural differences of good
and evil, but what have been controverted, and
that by persons who have pretended to learning;
to wisdom and philosophy. But the absurdity
of this way of arguing is very evident. The
principle is fallacious, that whatever hath been
controverted is uncertain. As well might it be
said, that whatever is capable of being abused
is not good or useful. It doth not follow, that
the Scriptures are not sufficiently clear and de-
terminate to be a rule of faith and practice in all
that is essential or necessary to salvation, because
there have been men in every age that have in-
terpreted them in different senses. The plainest
passages in any writings whatsoever may be per-
verted; nor is mens differing about the meaning

of the sacred text any argument against its certainty or perspicuity. Laws may be of great use, though they do not absolutely exclude chicanery and evasion. That can never be a good argument to prove, that the Scriptures are not a rule to be depended upon, which would equally prove, that no revelation that God could give could possibly be a rule of faith and practice, or of any use to guide men to truth and happiness. If God should make a revelation of his will for instructing mankind in what it most nearly concerneth them to know, and for directing them in the way of salvation; the possibility of which cannot be denied by any Theist; and should for this purpose appoint a code to be published, containing doctrines and laws; it may be justly questioned, whether it could possibly be made so clear and explicit, as that all men in all ages should agree in their sense of it. This could hardly be expected, except God should miraculously interpose with an irresistible influence to cause them all to think the same way, and give them all the same precise ideas of things, the same measures of natural abilities, and exactly the same means and opportunities for acquired improvement, the same sagacity, the same leisure, the same diligence; and except he should exert his divine power in an extraordinary manner for subduing or removing all their prejudices, and over-ruling their different passions, humours, inclinations, and interests; and should place them all exactly in the same situation and circumstances.

circumstances. And this would be by no means consistent with the wisdom of the divine government, or with the nature of man, and his freedom as a moral agent, and with the methods and orders of Providence. Nor is there any necessity for so extraordinary a procedure. For it would be absurd to the last degree to pretend, that the Scripture can be of no use to any man, except all men were to agree about it; or that it is not sufficiently clear to answer the end, if there be any persons that pervert or abuse it.

Yet, after all the clamour that has been raised about differences among Christians as to the sense of Scripture, there are many things of great importance, about which there hath been in all ages a very general agreement among professed Christians: They are agreed, that there is one God, who made heaven and earth, and all things which are therein: that he preserveth all things by the word of his power, and governeth all things by his Providence: that he is infinitely powerful, wise, and good, and is to be loved, feared, adored, obeyed, above all: that as there is one God, so there is one Mediator between God and man, *Jesus Christ the righteous*, whom he in his infinite love and mercy sent into the world to save and to redeem us: that he came to instruct us by his doctrine, and bring a clear revelation of the divine will, and to set before us a bright and most perfect example for our imitation: that he submitted to the most grievous sufferings, and to death itself, for our sakes, that he

he might obtain eternal redemption for us: that he rose again from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and is now crowned with glory and honour, and ever liveth to make intercession for us: that through him, and in his name, we are to offer up our prayers, and hope for the acceptance of our persons and services: that in him there is a new covenant established, and published to the world, in which there is a free and universal offer of pardon and mercy to all the truly penitent, and a most express promise of eternal life, as the reward of our sincere, though imperfect, obedience: that it is not enough to have a bare speculative faith, but we must be formed into an holy and godlike temper; and, in order to be prepared for that future happiness, must live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world: that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust, and a future judgment, when Christ shall judge the world in the Father's name, and give to every man according to his deeds; that the wicked shall be doomed to the most grievous punishments, and the righteous shall be unspeakably happy to all eternity. These are things of great consequence, and which have been generally acknowledged by Christians in all ages. And if there have been several things advanced by those that call themselves Christians, which are not well consistent with these generally acknowledged principles; if there have been controversies among them about points of considerable importance, as well as many

many contentions about things of little or no moment, this is no argument against the divine authority or usefulness of the sacred writings. Those that *wrest the Scriptures* must be accountable to him that gave them, for that perversion and abuse; as men must be accountable for the abuse of their reason; but this is far from proving, that therefore the Scriptures answer no valuable purpose, and could not be of a divine original. Still it is true, that whosoever will, with a teachable and attentive mind, and an upright intention to know and do the will of God, apply himself to read and consider the holy Scriptures, in an humble dependence on God's gracious assistances, will find vast advantage for instructing him in the knowledge of religion, and engaging him to the practice of it, and for guiding him in the way of salvation.

It appears then, that the foundation, on which his formidable dilemma is built, will not bear. There is at this time a *standard for Christianity*; even the doctrines and laws of our Saviour and his Apostles, as contained in the holy Scriptures. It must be and is acknowledged by all that profess themselves Christians, that whatever is revealed in those sacred books is true and certain, and whatever can be shewn to be contrary to what is there revealed is false. The *Romanists* as well as Protestants own the divinity and authenticity of the sacred text, though for particular views they would join unwritten traditions with it; and are for giving the church alone the authority to

interpret the Scriptures. The reason of their conduct is evident. It is not because they look upon the sacred text to be so obscure and ambiguous, that it cannot be understood by the people; but because they think the people, if left to themselves, will understand it so far as to see the inconsistency there is between true primitive Christianity as laid down in the New Testament, and the Papal system, and because their corrupt additions to Christianity cannot be proved by Scripture-authority.

I have already taken notice of what he saith concerning the fatal blow that Christianity received by the resurrection of letters. I suppose we are to take his word as a decisive proof of this; for no other proof of it is offered. But it may be affirmed on the contrary, that true primitive Christianity, that is, Christianity as laid down in the New Testament, had then a glorious revival. Many corrupt additions that had been made to it were thrown off. It hath never been better understood, nor its evidences set in a clearer light, than since that time. Some of the most admired names in the republic of letters have thought themselves worthily employed in endeavouring to illustrate the beauties of Scripture, and to clear its difficulties. It were easy to shew, if it were not a thing so well known as to render it needless, that those who have done most for the revival and spreading of learning and knowlege in all its branches, and who were most celebrated for their genius, judgment, various reading, and probity, have been persons

persons that expressed a great admiration for the holy Scriptures, and an hearty zeal for Christianity.

Thus I have considered what the late Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered in these Letters against the authority of the holy Scripture, and the Christian religion, as far as may be necessary to take off the force of the objections he hath raised against it, and which seem to have nothing in them proportioned to the unusual confidence with which they are advanced. It is hard to see what good end could be proposed by such an attempt. But perhaps it may be thought an advantage, that by — “ discovering error in
“ first principles founded upon facts, and break-
“ ing the charm, the enchanted castle, the
“ steepy rock, the burning lake; will disappear*.”
— And there are persons, no doubt, that would be well-pleased to see it proved, that Christianity is no better than delusion and enchantment; and particularly that the wicked have nothing to fear from *the burning lake*; some apprehensions of which may probably tend to make them uneasy in their vicious courses. But I should think, that a true lover of virtue, and of mankind, who impartially considers the purity of the Gospel-morals, the excellent tendency of its doctrines and precepts, and the power of its motives for engaging men to the practice of piety and virtue; and deterring them from vice and wickedness, will be apt to look upon it as a very ill employ-

* See his Letter on the Use of Study and Retirement, Vol. II. p. 221.

ment to endeavour to expose this religion to contempt, and to set bad men free from the wholesome terrors it inspires, and deprive good men of the sublime hopes and sacred joys it yields. But Christianity hath withstood much more formidable attacks; and will, I doubt not, continue to approve itself to those that examine it, and the evidences by which it is established, with minds free from vicious prejudices, and with that sincerity and simplicity of heart, that seriousness and attention, which becomes them in an affair of such vast importance.



REFLECTIONS

On the Late

LORD BOLINGBROKE'S LETTERS.

PART III.

His Lordship's Reflections upon our Civil Constitution, considered.

I Now come to what I proposed in the last place; *viz.* to consider the reflections cast in these Letters upon our Civil Constitution.

If the representation he makes of the state of things be just, the late Revolution was far from being an happy event to these nations. The consequence of it hath been to bring us to poverty, and into the most imminent danger of slavery, and to put us, in all respects, in a much worse condition than we were in before. He finds great fault with—" the new constitution
" of the revenue that was formed soon after
" the Revolution, and the method of funding
" that immediately took place: that the creation
" of funds, and the multiplication of taxes, *has*
" *increased* yearly the power of the crown; and
" that this has brought, and must bring, our
" liberties, by a natural and necessary progression,
" into more real, though less apparent danger,
" than

“ than they were in before the Revolution.” — He goes on to observe, that — “ a free people should not trust the sole management of so great a revenue, and the sole nomination of the legions of officers employed in it, to their chief magistrate.” — And he proposes, that it would be proper — “ to take this power and influence from the prince, or to share it with him:” — That “ national corruption is the natural and necessary consequence of investing the crown with the management of so great a revenue; and that the loss of liberty is the natural and necessary consequence of national corruption *.” — I leave it to those who understand this matter better, to debate about *the method of funding*, as he calls it. In general, it may be said, that the creating public funds, as a foundation for public credit, may be of great advantage when kept within proper bounds, though this, as every thing else, is capable of being abused. And the vast national debt that hath been incurred is not properly to be charged upon this, but chiefly upon the necessity of supporting expensive wars, some of which he himself owns to have been unavoidable. But that on which he appeareth to lay the greatest stress seems to proceed upon a wrong foundation; *viz.* That the king, by the new constitution of the revenue that was formed soon after the Revolution, has the sole management of the revenue, and the public money, in his hands. The very reverse of this is true. Before the Revolution the king might be said to have the sole management

* Vpl. I. p. 45, 46, 47, 48.

of the revenue. The whole income of the state, as Bishop *Burnet* justly observes, was in the power of the crown, and was called the revenue of the crown; and there was no distinction of what was to be allotted for the king's use, and what for the service of the public; by which means the application of the public money was in the disposal of the court, and the king had an opportunity of reserving what he pleased for his own designs. But after the Revolution; for preventing the misapplication of the public money, it was judged a wise measure to allot a separate income for the king's expences and household, called the civil list, and to put the rest of the public revenue intirely under the command of the parliament. And this is the present constitution of the revenue. The parliament, *i. e.* the people by their representatives, dispose of the public money as they think proper; they assign and appoint the uses and services to which it shall be applied: an account of which in every session is constantly submitted to parliament, before any farther supplies are granted. It is certain therefore, that, by the new constitution at the Revolution, the public money is not left solely to the discretionary management of the crown. The produce of the taxes, and all the public revenue, is appropriated and disposed of by parliament. The king's ministers are accountable for the management of it; and so are all the officers he employs. Though therefore he hath the nomination of the officers; yet these officers are under the controul of the people, and their representatives: nor is it in the power

of the crown to screen them from an inquiry, or from punishment, if they abuse that trust, and embezzle or misapply the public money. And what could a free people desire more? What more wise or reasonable constitution could have been established? If, as he insinuates, the parliament, or the people, will suffer themselves to be corrupted, if they will not exercise the power they have of inspecting the management of the public money, and calling the officers to an account, upon what is this to be charged? Not on the constitution, but on the corruption of mankind. And this is capable of abusing and perverting the best constitution in the world. But he would have the people take the nomination of officers from the prince, or at least share it with him; since, as he says, the public revenue by this constitution is not his revenue, nor the public expence his expence. So that all he seems to allow the king is, to keep a magnificent court, to live in splendor, upon what he calls the *salary settled upon him*; but he is, in effect, for taking the executive power out of his hands. And I shall leave it to the consideration of those that are skilled in these matters, whether this would not be a changing our antient *British* constitution, and a reducing the power of the crown into such bounds, as would destroy the balance so wisely appointed between the several powers legislative and executive; especially considering in how many instances the power and prerogatives of the crown have been weakened, and the vast accession that has been made to the
power

power of the commons, as his lordship has more than once observed, since the reign of *Henry the seventh*, and particularly since the Revolution.

I shall on this occasion insert some other passages of this author, in which he makes a very disadvantageous representation of the consequences of the Revolution, and of the present state of these nations. In his eighth Letter on the Use and Study of History, which is the first of the second volume, he saith, that—" in the
" administration that preceded the Revolution,
" trade had flourished, and our nation had grown
" opulent: but the general interest of *Europe*
" had been too much neglected by us; and
" slavery, under the umbrage of prerogative, had
" been well nigh established among us. In those
" that have followed, taxes upon taxes, and
" debts upon debts, have been perpetually ac-
" cumulated, till a small number of families
" have grown into immense wealth, and national
" beggary has been brought upon us—The
" reign of prerogative was short; and the evils
" and dangers to which we were exposed by it
" ended with it: but the reign of false and
" squandering policy has lasted long; it lasts
" still; and will finally complete our ruin. Beg-
" gary has been the consequence of slavery in
" some countries: slavery will probably be the
" consequence of beggary in ours: and if it is
" so, we know at whose door to lay it *."—And
again, he says, that—" the rage of warring
" confirmed the beggary of our nation, which

* Vol. II. p. 114, 115.

“ began as early as the Revolution *.”—And afterwards, that—“ the whole constitution of
 “ our country, and even the character of our
 “ nation, has been altered. That the men called
 “ Whigs have made a worse use of long wars,
 “ and new systems of revenues, since the Revo-
 “ lution, than the men called Tories made be-
 “ fore it of long peace, and stale prerogative †.”

—In the same Letter he draweth a comparison between the state and temper of the nation after the Restoration, and that since the Revolution; and gives the preference greatly to the former. He observes, that—“ since the Revolution our
 “ kings have been reduced indeed to a seeming
 “ annual dependence on parliament; but the
 “ business of parliament, which was esteemed
 “ in general a duty before, has been exercised
 “ in general as a trade—Few know, and scarce
 “ any respect, the *British* constitution. That of
 “ the church has been long derided, that of the
 “ state as long neglected; and both have been
 “ left at the mercy of the men in power, who-
 “ soever they were—That the church, at least
 “ the hierarchy, however sacred its origin, is
 “ become an useless burden on the state; and
 “ the state is become, under antient forms, a
 “ new and undefinable monster, composed of a
 “ king without monarchical splendor, a senate
 “ of nobles without aristocratical independency,
 “ and a senate of commons without democrati-
 “ cal freedom. The very idea of wit, and all
 “ that can be called taste, has been lost among

* Vol. II. p. 167. † Ibid. p. 172, 173.

“ the great : arts and sciences are scarce alive ;
“ luxury has been increased, but not refined :
“ corruption has been established, and is
“ avowed *.”

I think a more odious representation could scarce be made of the state of things under the present establishment ; and that by one who makes frequent and strong professions of his love to his country, and concern for its welfare. And as this seems to be calculated to inflame the people, so his lordship takes care to let them know their power in such a case. For after having observed, that the king, in such a constitution as ours, is but the *first servant of the people*, he plainly declares, that the people not only have a right to complain, represent, and petition, but have a right of resistance, not merely to the king, or to part of the legislature, but to the whole legislative power, the king and parliament together—“ For sure, saith he, there
“ cannot be a greater absurdity, than to affirm,
“ that the people have a remedy in resistance,
“ when their prince attempts to enslave them ;
“ but that they have none, when their represen-
“ tatives sell themselves and them †.”—He farther observes, that—“ in free governments
“ like ours the care of the state is the care of
“ multitudes ; and that even those whom the
“ prince appoints are not only answerable to him,
“ but like him, and before him, to the nation,
“ for their behaviour in their several posts ||.”—

* Vol. II. p. 173, 174, 175. † Vol. I. p. 192, 193.
|| Ibid. p. 194.

The manner of expression here is remarkable—
 “Those whom the prince appoints are answer-
 “able, like him, to the nation for their be-
 “haviour in their several posts.”—Where he
 plainly intimates, that not only is the king ac-
 countable by his officers and ministers, but the
 king himself, as well as his officers, and dis-
 tinctly from them, is accountable to the nation
 for his behaviour in his post. I shall not at
 present enter into the debate, whether these
 principles are well-founded or not. But there
 are two or three observations that naturally offer
 themselves on this occasion. One is, that this
 was not the doctrine encouraged at the latter end
 of *Queen Anne's* reign, when the late lord
Bolingbroke had so great a share in the admini-
 stration, and when it was so much the fashion
 to run down those who expressed a zeal for the
 principles on which the late Revolution was
 founded, as men of republican and antimonar-
 chical principles. Another reflection is this,
 that it is hard to see with what consistency he
 could, as he does in his second Letter, brand
 the resistance of the parliament to the king in
 1641. with the name of *Rebellion*, at the same
 time that he owns—“it was not without reason
 “on account of liberty *.”—He not only asserts
 a right in the people to resist the king, but to
 resist the whole legislature, the king and par-
 liament together, and to call the king himself,
 as well as his officers, to an account for his be-
 haviour in his post, as being—“the first servant

* Vol. I. p. 44.

“ of the people;”—which is carrying it farther than many of those did that were concerned in carrying on the war against the king, and was the very principle on which the high-commission court was founded. But the most important reflection is, that if we compare this with some other parts of his Letters, he seems to point at the present as a proper time for the people to exert the powers he invests them with: for he expressly declateth, that our liberties are now in more real danger than they were in before the Revolution; and yet, at that time, they were in such danger, by his own acknowledgement, as —“ rendered a Revolution necessary and practicable.” —He avers, that national corruption, which he makes the necessary consequence of investing the crown with the nomination of the officers employed in managing the revenue, is become universal; and that the loss of liberty is the natural and necessary consequence of national corruption: that the church is become an useless burden on the state, and the state is become a new and undefinable monster: and that the business of parliament has since the revolution been exercised in general as a trade; *i. e.* they have been willing, as he elsewhere expresses it —“ to sell themselves, and the people.” — If this be the case, it is high time, upon his principles, for the people to exert themselves, and absolutely to new-mold the constitution, and not only to complain, represent, and petition, but to make use of force to this purpose, against the

the king, and the parliament too, if they should oppose them.

It is not my design to enter upon a laborious vindication of our present constitution and government against these representations; which appear to be highly exaggerated; and betray more of spleen and discontent, than of a true patriot spirit, or generous concern for the public. If any man should with modesty and candor point to what he thought amiss in the constitution or administration, and propose what appeared to him the properest remedies, it would deserve regard, as proceeding from an honest zeal for the true interest of his country. But such general odious reflections, which plainly discover a disposition to find fault, and give the most malicious turn to everything, seem not so much intended for correcting and rectifying abuses, as for inflaming the passions of the people. The natural tendency of such representations is, if not to excite insurrections, yet at least to weaken the government, and expose it to contempt, and to deprive it of all support in the affections of the people. For who that believes these representations to be just, can have any zeal for such an establishment, or think it worth contending for? Since whatever change should happen, there may possibly be a better, but can hardly be a worse. But let it be remembered, that the same person who gives this disadvantageous idea of the present state of our constitution, hath also thought proper to make a very disadvantageous representation of Christianity itself. The same person

person who pronounceth, that our liberties have been more endangered than ever since the Revolution, hath also taken upon him to affirm, that Christianity hath been decaying ever since the resurrection of letters. One would think, according to his representation, that ever since the Revolution, which he in effect makes the æra of beggary, corruption, and slavery, we were become a most miserable people. And yet certain it is, that since that time the national prosperity and glory have been raised to the greatest height, beyond the example of former ages. Never in any period of the *English* history had we so long together times of greater felicity, or so full an enjoyment of our liberties civil and religious, such affluence and opulence, and such an abundance of every thing that can contribute to make a nation happy. If this prosperity and affluence hath produced luxury, which is the too usual effect of it, and the liberty we have enjoyed hath given occasion to a boundless licentiousness, it would be wrong to lay the fault upon the advantages themselves, rather than upon our own ungrateful abuse of them. If, as his lordship affirms, we are fallen into a great degeneracy of taste, as well as dissoluteness of manners, I cannot think it the properest way to retrieve our taste, to express such an extreme contempt, as he frequently doth, of those that devote themselves to the pursuits of learning: nor is it likely to mend our morals, to take pains to set the people loose from the obligations of Christianity, by attempting to weaken or destroy the evidences

of

of its divine authority. It is a much better way to promote the national happiness, to endeavour to revive the true Christian spirit, and a strong sense of religion, on the minds of men; and to put the people upon improving the advantages they enjoy, instead of fomenting their discontents, and keeping up that spirit of party, which hath done so much mischief among us, and hath greatly contributed to deprave our taste, and our morals too. And, surely, any one, that hath a just concern for our civil liberties and privileges, or for our holy religion, and the liberty of professing it in its purity, and for the sacred rights of conscience, ought to set a value on an establishment, in which these rights are preserved to us to a degree that is not to be parallel'd in any other nation.

If there be an huge national debt upon us, if, as he complains, taxes upon taxes, debts upon debts, have been accumulated, it would be great injustice to charge this upon the Revolution, and the settlement consequent upon it. This indeed hath been often done by the enemies of our present establishment, with the worst of views. But the principles laid down by the admired author of these Letters, and the concessions he himself hath made, will help to take off the force of this charge, and shew it not to be well-founded.

In his sixth Letter he has some good observations on the notion of a balance of power in *Europe*, on the equal poise of which the safety and tranquillity of the whole must depend: and

that — “ to hinder it from being destroyed by
 “ preventing too much power from falling into
 “ one scale, has been the principle of all the
 “ wise counsels of *Europe*, relatively to *France*,
 “ and the house of *Austria*, for these two cen-
 “ turies past, and subsists at this hour *.” — And
 in his seventh Letter, in which he gives a sketch
 of the state and history of *Europe*, from the
Pyrenean treaty in 1659. to the year 1688. he
 gives a clear and elegant account of the at-
 tempts made by *France* towards an universal
 monarchy, and of the several steps by which
 they arrived to such an exorbitant power; and
 that — “ an opposition to the growing power
 “ of *France* has been the principal affair of
 “ *Europe*, during the greatest part of this pe-
 “ riod.” — And in the same Letter he acknow-
 legeth, that — “ *England* was fatally engaged
 “ to act a part in the conspiracy against the
 “ peace and liberty of *Europe*; nay, against her
 “ own peace, and her own liberty: for a bub-
 “ ble's part it was, equally wicked and impo-
 “ litic.” — And he expressly declares concern-
 ing King *Charles* the second, that — “ he
 “ thought it necessary to abet the designs of
 “ *France* on the continent, that *France* might
 “ abet his designs in his own kingdom; which
 “ were, to favour popery, and make himself
 “ absolute at home. This (he says) he could
 “ prove, if he were at liberty to produce the
 “ private relations he had read formerly drawn
 “ up, by those who were no enemies to such

* Vol. I. p. 231, 232.

“ designs, and on the authority of those who
 “ were parties to them.” — He adds, that —
 “ whatever King *Charles* the second intended,
 “ certain it is, that his conduct established
 “ the superiority of *France* in *Europe* *.” —
 And afterwards, he again speaks of — “ the
 “ false notions and iniquity of the counsels of
 “ *England*, as what, among other causes, not
 “ only hindered the growth of the *French* power
 “ from being stopped in time, but nursed it up
 “ into a strength almost insuperable by any future
 “ confederacy §.” And in his eighth Letter he
 saith, that — “ the court of *England* had sub-
 “ mitted to abet the usurpations of *France*,
 “ and the king of *England* had stooped to be
 “ her pensioner:” — and that, — “ after
 “ the elevation of the prince of *Orange* to the
 “ throne of *England*, the nation engaged with
 “ all imaginable zeal, in the common cause of
 “ *Europe*, to reduce the exorbitant power of
 “ *France*, to prevent her future, and to revenge
 “ her past attempts:” — and that — “ diffi-
 “ cult as it was, we were obliged on every ac-
 “ count, and, by reasons of all kinds, to en-
 “ gage in it:” — though he blames them for
 not doing it with more order and œconomy ||.

Before I proceed farther, it may be proper to
 make some reflections. It appeareth then, by
 his own acknowledgement, that it was absolutely
 necessary, for the safety of *Europe* in general,
 and our own in particular, to oppose the grow-

ing power of *France*; that yet *England*, in the reign of King *Charles* the second, instead of checking that power, abetted it; and acted in a fatal conspiracy against the peace and liberty of *Europe*; nay, against her own peace, and her own liberty: and that this conduct established the superiority of *France* in *Europe*; and not only hindered the growth of the *French* power from being stopped in time, but nursed it up into a strength almost insuperable by any future confederacy. He also acknowledgeth, that, after the Revolution, the nation engaged with zeal to reduce the exorbitant power of *France*; and that we were obliged to do it on every account, and by all manner of reasons. Upon this view of things, it appears, that the conduct of *England*, before the Revolution, was, as he calls it, *wicked and impolitic*; and that, after the Revolution, under King *William*, it was wise and glorious: that the war *England* then enter'd into, to put a stop to the growth of the *French* power, was absolutely necessary for our own liberty and safety, as well as that of *Europe*: and that what made this war necessary, was the wretched conduct of *England*, before the Revolution, in abetting the *French* power, and establishing their superiority in *Europe*, whereby it was carried to an height almost insuperable. I think therefore it manifestly followeth, that whatever expences were caused by the war, are properly chargeable, not on the Revolution, but on the management in the times preceding it; which brought the nation under a necessity of entering

tering into a most hazardous and expensive war for defending their own liberty and safety: and this war it was which brought on their debts, and their taxes. He indeed blameth the want of œconomy: and it is very easy, in this and many other cases, for those that come after, to see where affairs might possibly have been better conducted, and to point to errors and defects in management, which perhaps the wisest persons were not sensible of at the time. But whatever there is in this charge, it is wrong to lay it, where he seems willing intirely to lay it, on the *men called Whigs*. It was partly owing to accidents, which could not well be prevented, and partly to the applotting insufficient funds; which is said to have been principally owing not to King *William* and his friends, but to the management of those that opposed his administration, and endeavoured to clog the war, and distress the government. But let the œconomy have been never so good, an increase of taxes and debts could scarce possibly have been avoided.

As to the war which we enter'd into under Queen *Anne*, he saith, that — “ it must be
 “ confessed, that the war was unavoidable, for
 “ the immediate securing of commerce, and of
 “ barriers, for the preventing an union of the
 “ two monarchies of *France* and *Spain* in any
 “ future time, and the preservation of a certain
 “ degree, at least, of equality, in the scale of
 “ power*.” And again, that — “ the war
 “ was wise and just till 1706. because necessary

“ to maintain that equality among the powers of
 “ *Europe*, on which the public peace and com-
 “ mon prosperity depends*.” We have then
 his own acknowledgement, that the war carried
 on against *France* in King *William's* time, and
 in Queen *Anne's*, till the year 1706. *i. e.* till
 the latter end of that year, was unavoidable,
 and necessary for our own liberty, peace, and
 safety; and, consequently, whatever debts were
 contracted, and taxes laid on, in that time, and
 in consequence of that war, ought not to be
 turned to the prejudice of the administration.

He asserts indeed, that the war was unwise
 and unjust, after the year 1706. because *France*
 was then reduced, and all the ends of the war,
 and of the grand alliance, might have been then
 obtained by a peace; and that — “ thenceforth
 “ it became a war of passion, of ambition, of
 “ avarice, and private interest, to which the
 “ general interest of *Europe* was sacrificed §.”

Let us examine this a little by his own prin-
 ciples and concessions.

He acknowledgeth, that — “ one of the prin-
 “ cipal ends proposed by the war, was, to ob-
 “ tain an effectual security against the contingent
 “ union of the two crowns of *France* and
 “ *Spain*||.” — And, indeed, the preventing that
 union is expressly mention'd as one main article
 of the grand alliance. And he himself owns,
 that — “ the setting an *Austrian* prince upon
 “ the *Spanish* throne, was, no doubt, the surest
 “ expedient to prevent an union of the two mon-

* Vol. II. p. 68.

§ Ib. p. 53.

|| Ib. p. 52;

“ archies

“archies of *France* and *Spain* ||.” — And again he saith, that — “he who transports himself back to that time (speaking of the time of the beginning of the war) must acknowledge, that the confederated powers in general could not but be of *Gartb's* mind, that

“ ————— an *Austrian* prince alone

“ *Is fit to nod upon the Spanish throne.*”

“And that they could not but think it more agreeable to the interest of *Europe*, that a branch of *Austria*, than a branch of *Bourbon*, should gather the *Spanish* succession, and that the maritime powers might think this to be more for their particular interest †.” — Though, therefore, as he often urges, and seems to lay a mighty stress upon it, the restitution of the whole *Spanish* monarchy to the emperor was not expressly stipulated in the grand alliance, the reason of it could not be what he is pleased to allege — “because the allies, in the wisdom of their counsels, saw, that the liberties of *Europe* would be in no danger, if *Spain* and the *Indies* were left in the hands of a prince of the house of *Bourbon* §.” For I believe there were few at that time, who were really enemies to *France*, that did or could suppose this. On the contrary, since the grand alliance, by his own acknowledgement, was principally designed to prevent the union of the two monarchies of *France* and *Spain* : and since he

himself also confesses, that the surest expedient to prevent that union was, undoubtedly, to set a prince of the house of *Austria* on the *Spanish* throne; and that the confederate powers were, at the beginning of the war, and could not but be, of opinion, that it was more agreeable to the interest of *Europe* in general, and of the maritime powers in particular, that a branch of the house of *Austria*, than a branch of *Bourbon*, should gather the *Spanish* succession; it may be fairly concluded, that this was what they had all along in view from the beginning of the war, if they could be able to accomplish it. He observes, that ——— “ the “ councils in *England* and *Holland* preferred “ very wisely, by their engagements in the “ grand alliance, what was more practicable, “ tho' less eligible, to what they deemed more “ eligible, but saw become, by the course “ of events, absolutely impracticable, or too “ difficult *.” ——— Here he plainly intimates, that the wise councils in *England* and *Holland*, at the beginning of the war, judged it would be more eligible, if it were practicable, to wrest the *Spanish* monarchy out of the hands of a prince of the house of *Bourbon*; and that the only reason why they did not expressly bind themselves to it in the grand alliance, was, their judging it not practicable, or too difficult. Yet it is plain they resolved to try what they could do to effect it. And they themselves, who best knew their own meaning, immediately attempted

• Vol. II. p. 78.

it, as soon as ever they had an opportunity for it, as he owns *. He treats this, indeed, as a departing from the principles of the grand alliance; but the contrary, I think, now plainly appears from his own concessions. When therefore, in the course of the war, the surprising success they met with, even in *Spain* itself, gave them reason to believe they should be able to effect it, it would be absurd to imagine they would not be for pushing their advantage, and making use of that which they judged, and he acknowledgeth, to be undoubtedly the surest expedient for preventing that union of the two crowns which they so much dreaded. It would be no proof of the wisdom of their councils, if they did not prefer what was in itself, and what appeared to them, *more eligible*, and which now, they had reason to think, was become *practicable*. He owns, that, — “in 1706. the confederate arms were superior in *Spain*, and several provinces acknowledg’d *Charles* the third: and that the *Spanish* dominions in *Italy* were in their power when they pleas’d §.” — Now, I think, whoever considers this, and that *France*, as he avers, — “had not only been defeated on every side, but the inward state of that kingdom was already more exhausted than ever it had been,” will easily see, that there were then very fair prospects of settling a prince of the house of *Austria* on the *Spanish* throne, and thereby taking the most effectual expedient to prevent an union of the two crowns of *France*

and *Spain*. And I dare appeal to any man, whether, to have quitted it at that time, and in those circumstances, and to have accepted a partition of the *Spanish* monarchy, still leaving *Spain* and the *Indies* in the hands of the house of *Bourbon*, would not have been the most unaccountable conduct in the world, contrary to all the rules of good policy: except they had the gift of prophecy; and could have foreseen what afterwards happen'd. And it is very probable, that some of those men, who were afterwards loudest in their clamours against the then ministry, for not having made a peace with *France* upon the terms propos'd by her in 1706: would have been equally loud in their clamours against them, if they had made it, and would not have fail'd to charge them with having betray'd the interests of *Great Britain* and *Europe*, and given up the *Spanish* monarchy to *France*, when there was so great a probability of wresting it out of their hands. How could any ministry have answer'd giving up again what they had already conquer'd in *Spain*, when they had so fair a prospect of obtaining the whole? or how would they have dared to do it, when, by his own confession, the parliament had made an express declaration against making peace, while *Spain* and the *Indies* were in the hands of the house of *Bourbon*? Upon the whole, the matter may be brought to this short issue: He owns, that, from the beginning, the powers that formed the grand alliance, would have thought it more eligible to fix an *Austrian* prince

on the throne of *Spain*, if they had judged it practicable: and that this was really the best and surest expedient to prevent an union of the two crowns of *France* and *Spain*; to prevent which was the principal object of the grand alliance. When, therefore, in the course of the war, by their extraordinary successes, they had reason to think this practicable, as undoubtedly they did in 1706. it would have been acting a strange part, to have given up these prospects for any offers *France* could then make, with a reservation of *Spain* and the *Indies* to the house of *Bourbon*.

The same way of reasoning will justify the not hearkening to the terms proposed by *France* in 1709. He acknowledges, that — “ before the year 1710. the war was kept alive with alternate successes in *Spain*; and it may be said therefore, that the design of conquering this kingdom continued, as well as the hopes of succeeding *.” — And since, even till the year 1710. there was hope of succeeding in *Spain*, it was right to continue the war till that time, and not to hearken to any terms, that should leave the house of *Bourbon* in possession of *Spain* and the *Indies*, especially, considering the great successes of the allies in the *Netherlands* since 1706. which gave ground to think, that *France* would be under a necessity of coming into the terms insisted on by the allies. He endeavoureth, indeed, to depreciate those successes. He observes, that — “ a deluge of blood was spilt to dislodge the *French*, for we did no more, at

"*Malplaquet* †." But this dislodgment, considering the difficulties that were surmounted, so effectually intimidated the *French*, that they durst no more look the army of the allies in the face, and suffer'd them to take the important town of *Mons* in their sight, soon after, without offering to relieve it. But, I suppose, the taking of that city must also pass for no more than a dislodging the *French* from it. He expressly affirms, that there were but three towns taken in the year 1710 ||. *Aire*, *Bethune*, and *St. Venant*; and intirely drops *Douay*, the most important conquest of that campaign; and which was of such consequence to *France*, that, in all proposals about yielding places to the allies for a barrier, *Douay* was still excepted. It can hardly be supposed, that his lordship had forgotten that such a place as *Douay* was taken that campaign, when he so distinctly remembred *Aire* *Bethune*, and *St. Venant*, places much more inconsiderable: but he judged it to his purpose not to mention it.

The principal design of the long Letter which is the eighth on the use and study of history, and the first in the second volume, appears plainly to be to vindicate the conduct of the ministry that made the peace of *Utrecht*. This is not to be wonder'd at, considering the great hand his lordship had in carrying on and concluding that treaty, And if he had contented himself with representing the reasons the ministry had for that measure, nobody would have blamed

† Vol. II. p. 147.

|| *Ib.* p. 103.

him; since it is natural for every man to endeavour to clear his own reputation and management. But it can scarce escape the observation of the commonest reader, that he seems to have given himself up to resentment and prejudice. A great part of this Letter is written with the stile and spirit of a party-pamphlet: nor is there much in it that had not been urged, and replied to, in the pamphlets of that time, which were written with too much heat and passion on both sides. And I am sorry to find, that his lordship, after so many years, had not suffered his spirit and resentments to cool, but still preserved the rage of that party-spirit, which had so much prevailed through the nation during the time that he was in the administration.

Whole pages might be filled with the invectives which he has poured forth against the Whigs, and those that opposed the measures which were carrying on in the latter end of Queen Anne's reign. He represents them, as having sacrificed the wealth of their country to the interests of foreigners; and avers, that all their opposition to the peace was laid in injustice and folly; and that, if their secret designs and intrigues were laid open, the most confused scene of iniquity and folly that it is possible to imagine, would appear; and that it would shock the eye of every honest man. He chargeth them with being engaged in a league with foreigners against their country, and their Queen; and with a phrensy more unaccountable, and not much less criminal, than that which made

and maintain'd the solemn league and covenant formerly: that they were guilty, during the Queen's life, of real treasons, and might, if she had lived a little longer, have broken out into open rebellion. Nor is he much less free in his invectives against the *Dutch*. He representeth the chief men that governed in *Holland* as neither wise nor honest; and chargeth them, as he doth the Whigs, with phrensy: that the prudent and sober states continued to act like forward children, or like men drunk with resentment and passion; and that a spirit of faction and private interest prevailed among them over reason of state. And he declares his astonishment at their arrogance, in presuming to exclaim against a Queen of *Great Britain* for the orders given to her general, not to join in any siege or battle.

Without taking any particular notice of these invectives, which I have mention'd as a specimen of the spirit and temper with which he writes, I shall only observe, that what he hath himself owned in this Letter, with regard to the peace of *Utrecht*, tendeth to give no very advantageous idea of it. — “ I shall not be surpris'd (saith he to his noble correspondent) if you think that the peace of *Utrecht* was not answerable to the success of the war, nor to the efforts that were made in it. I think so myself, and have always owned that I thought so. Since we committed a successful folly, we ought to have reap'd more advantage from it than we did; and ought to have

“ have reduced the power of *France*, and to
 “ have strengthened her neighbourhood, much
 “ more than we did *.” — And again, that
 — “ the low and exhausted state to which
 “ *France* was reduced by the last great war,
 “ was but a momentary reduction of her
 “ power ; ——— and whatever reduction was
 “ brought about by the treaty of *Utrecht* was
 “ not sufficient: that the true reduction of
 “ the exorbitant power of *France* consisted in
 “ disarming her frontiers, and fortifying the
 “ barriers against her, by the cession and de-
 “ molition of many more places than she
 “ yielded up at *Utrecht* ; but not of more
 “ than she might have been obliged to sacri-
 “ fice to her own immediate relief, and to the
 “ future security of her neighbours §.” ———

Here is a fair confession, that the peace of
Utrecht was not, what it was so often, with tri-
 umph, declared to be, at the time when it was
 made, a safe and honourable peace. For, if
 this representation be true, it was neither safe
 nor honourable; it was neither answerable to
 the success of the war, nor to the efforts that
 were made in it: we ought to have reduced the
 power of *France*, and to have strengthened her
 neighbours, more than we did: *France* ought to
 have been obliged to a cession and demolition of
 many more places than she yielded up at *Utrecht*.
 This was a sacrifice she might have been obliged
 to make to her own immediate relief, and to the
 future security of her neighbours. To this may

be added what he saith in the conclusion of his seventh Letter, that — “ *France* then wound up advantageously the ambitious system she had been fifty years in weaving, and concluded a war, in which she was defeated on every side, and wholly exhausted, with little diminution of the provinces and barriers acquired to *France*, and with the quiet possession of *Spain* and the *Indies* to a prince of the house of *Bourbon* ||.” — And if this was the case, it cannot be wonder’d at, that there were many persons that disapproved, and did all they could to prevent a peace, which helped *France* to wind up so advantageously her ambitious system, and left her, after a war, in which she had been defeated on every side, and wholly exhausted, in possession of so many advantages, and unjust acquisitions. His lordship, indeed, has found out an excellent way for throwing the blame of making such an insufficient peace, not upon those that concluded it, but upon those that opposed it. He affirms, that — “ it was solely owing to them that opposed the peace, that *France* was not obliged to make those sacrifices: and he is willing to put his whole credit, and the whole merit of the cause, upon this issue §”. — That — “ the Queen was, to the utmost degree, desirous to act in union with her allies; and that the disunion of the allies gave *France* great advantage; but that this disunion was owing to those that opposed the Queen’s measures.” — This he

represents as so plain, that no man that has any shame about him can deny it. These things he enlarges upon, for many pages together, in a declamation, which, for heat and bitterness, cannot be easily parallel'd §. But, without entering very deep into the matter, one may venture to say, and yet not be thought lost to all sense of shame, that how good soever the intentions of the managers might be, some of the measures they took were very unhappily chosen, either for preserving union among the allies, or obtaining an advantageous peace from *France*. They entered into a secret correspondence with *France*, and carried it on for some time, without the participation of the other allies: and the first preliminaries that were published, in consequence of this, on the part of *France*, were visibly short of what she had offer'd not long before. Great and public abuse was thrown upon the allies, in papers known to be written under the direction of the ministry; and endeavours were used to raise a spirit against them through the nation. The *Dutch*, in particular, were treated with great insolence and reproach; odious charges were advanced against them; and what they caused to be published in their own vindication, was, instead of being answer'd, treated with the utmost indignity. At the same time, pains were taken to persuade the people, that the nation was so impoverish'd and exhausted, that they were unable to carry on the war any longer. Heavy charges were laid against the former

ministry for continuing the war so long; and the new ministers made it a point, on which they valued themselves, — “to save their country (as he expresseth it) from absolute insolvency and bankruptcy, and to deliver her from the necessity of bearing any longer so unequal a part in so unnecessary a war.” — These being the measures that were taken in *England*, can it be imagined, that so politic a court as that of *France* would not lay hold of such an advantage, and improve it? They were, undoubtedly, very desirous of peace; but they knew also, that a peace the *British* ministry must and would have; and that therefore, by standing out a little longer, they should obtain peace upon much more advantageous terms to *France*, than before they had reason to expect. And so eager were the *British* ministry to get rid of the war, that, though they had given the *Dutch* positive assurances, in the beginning of the year 1712, that they would act vigorously in the common cause, yet, in two months after, in the beginning of the campaign, orders were sent, in the Queen's name, to the *British* general, not to engage in any siege or battle till farther orders. This was done in concert with the *French*, the common enemy, and without the participation of the allies; and was soon followed by a cessation of arms, and by an actual separation of the national *British* troops, and an endeavour to separate all the foreign troops in the *British* pay, from the rest of the confederate army. A strange measure this, if considered in all its circumstances.

cumstances. And his lordship's vindication of it is almost as extraordinary. I shall not examine it, though, if I were disposed to do so, I should not desire greater advantage than he has given. And those who are not acquainted with his lordship's manner, will be apt to wonder at the peculiar strain of confidence with which he expresseth himself on this occasion.

After having charged the states with arrogance and presumption, in finding fault with the Queen's measures, he insisteth upon it, that if they would have made a right use of the two months suspension, by joining with the Queen—"even then we might have resumed the superiority we began to lose in the congress *."—This is a fair confession, that from the time those orders were given to the *British* general, we began to lose that superiority in the congress, which he had before acknowledged we had in the beginning of the year 1712 †. And indeed I cannot see, how it could be otherwise; since, by this step, the *French* plainly saw, that *England* was determined not to carry on the war any longer. Nor, after such a step, would it have been in the power of the Queen, and the *Dutch* united, to regain that superiority in the congress which they had lost; except *France* had been persuaded, that, in case they did not come into such terms as the allies might think necessary, *Great Britain* would join heartily in pushing the war.

* Vol. II. p. 144.

† Ibid. p. 140, 141.

But they very well knew the contrary; and that they had nothing farther to fear from the *British counsels* or *forces*.

But I shall not insist longer on these things, as it is not my intention to enter on a particular examination of what he hath offered in vindication of the peace of *Utrecht*. I shall only add this one farther remark, in relation to it; that he, all along, preserves the favourite stile of that time, the *Queen's peace*, the *Queen's measures*; and all opposition against the then ministry, and the measures they were taking, is constantly represented as a sort of high treason against her Majesty, and an insult upon her authority royal. But his lordship has, since that time, known very well how to distinguish between the king and his ministers; and has treated it as great insolence in a ministry, to screen their measures under the shadow of the royal authority.

His lordship, after having so vehemently inveighed against the Whigs, for being so eager to carry on the war in *Queen Anne's* reign, finds no less fault with them, for the too pacific disposition they shewed afterwards. He observes, that—“a rage of warring possessed a party in our nation till the death of the late queen; a rage of negotiating has possessed the same party of men ever since †.” And so he goes on to expose the measures of the ministry, whom he represents as having been in *one perpetual maze*. I shall not enter into the question, how far the

† Vol. II. p. 167.

ministers were in the right or wrong, in managing their negotiations. This I leave to those who understand these matters better than I can pretend to do, and about which probably men of excellent sense and understanding may differ in their sentiments. I shall only observe, how impossible it is for that party of men to please his lordship, against whom he hath declared so fixed an aversion, and who, he says, have had the administration in their hands almost ever since the Revolution. Whether they war or negotiate, they are always in the wrong. His lordship has mentioned a twofold rage, as he calls it, a rage of warring, and a rage of negotiating. There is a third rage, as remarkable as either of them; and that is, the rage of a party-spirit, which leads men to give the worst turns, and put the most odious construction upon every thing. Scarce any measures can be taken in political matters, but what are liable to objections and inconveniences, which, when they fall into the hands of a person of such bright parts, and great command of words, as the late lord *Bolingbroke*, may be made to appear in a very disadvantageous light. And yet perhaps the persons he blames were not so much in the wrong, or so inconsistent with themselves, as he represents them, in having been first for warring, and afterwards for negotiating. He himself owns, that the war entered into against *France*, was, for some years, necessary; and that it was carried on with surprising success. The Whigs were for continuing

to push the war, though the nation was very much burdened, till they had effectually broken and humbled the *French* power, and had reaped advantages answerable to such unparalleled successes. And they might very consistently be of this opinion, and yet afterwards, when the opportunity was let slip, and not to be retrieved, when the peace was made, and the confederacy broken, they might be against plunging the nation into new wars, which would add to that debt which had been necessarily incurred before. And if, for preventing such new wars, they sometimes carried their desire of negotiating too far, if in some cases they appeared pacific, even to a degree of tameness, however others might find fault with them, his lordship, and those of his sentiments, had no right to do so; who had so bitterly inveighed against them, for being eager to carry on a war, in which they had so glorious prospects. For certainly, if the nation's being exhausted, and overburdened with debts, were a reason for putting an end to that glorious and successful war, by a peace, which was far from answering the ends of it, or reaping the advantages that might be expected from it; this reason was much stronger for not entering into new wars, in which they could not promise themselves equal success, and of which it was not easy to see the consequences. Though therefore their treaties and negotiations were not in all respects so happily conducted, as his lordship, in his superior wisdom might think should have been done,

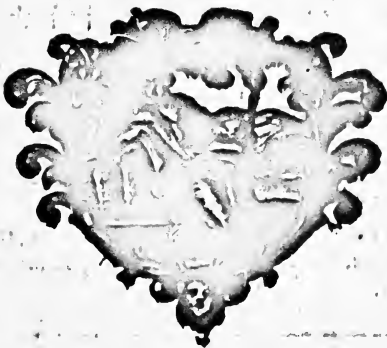
yet

yet he ought at least to have commended their pacific intention. It is proper to observe, that since the writing of his long Letter on the peace of *Utrecht*, there hath been another war, which could not be avoided, besides a dangerous rebellion at home, which hath occasioned a new and vast expence, and hath mightily increased the national debt, which was so great before. But the administration is not to be blamed, who kept out of that war as long as they could, till the voice of the nation demanded it; much less are they to be blamed for that rebellion, which was raised with a view to overturn the present establishment. And yet so unreasonable are the enemies of our constitution, as to exclaim against the government, for the expences and debts, that the war which the whole nation demanded, and the rebellion which they themselves had raised, made necessary.

I have now finished my remarks on the late Lord *Bolingbroke's* Letters on the Study and Use of History. It is with regret that I have found myself obliged to say many things that may seem to bear hard upon the reputation of a writer of such eminence. But, I believe, by this time, it appears, that how great soever his abilities must be acknowledged to be, his confident assertions are not absolutely to be depended upon, not even in civil and political, much less in religious matters. It cannot but be matter of great concern, to see such open attempts made against what ought to be dearer to us than our lives. But, I hope, the effect will be, to

convince all good men of the necessity they are under of uniting in hearty and earnest endeavours to serve and promote the Christian cause, and the real welfare of their country; and I shall count myself happy, if these reflections can contribute in any degree to so excellent an end.

F I N I S.



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